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A TRIP TO MEXICO

OR

RECOLLECTIONS

38043

OF

A TEN-MONTHS' RAMBLE

IN

1849-50.

BY A BARRISTER.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER, AND CO. CORNHILL.
1851.

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TO

HIS DEAR MOTHER,

This little Book

IS MOST AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY HER SON,

THE AUTHOR.

LONDON, *Feb.* 1851.

PREFACE.

EVERY one nowadays who only travels from John-o'-Groats-House to the Lands-End, thinks it necessary to write a book: and why should not I who have been all the way to Mexico and back? However, I should be sorry to let mine make its appearance in the world, without a word of caution as to its contents, and without some hint as to the reasons why it was undertaken.

When I commenced this journey, and even during its progress, I had not the slightest intention of appearing in print, and consequently I took no notes at all. On my return home, some members of my own Family, and several

friends, wishing to have a more detailed account of my performances than I could give them *viva voce*, persuaded me to undertake the task of book-making. How I have succeeded in this—to me—very new line, I will leave the public to decide; but I would have the aforesaid public to remember, that the whole of my production, as I have stated in my title-page, is derived from recollection, and that, as such, I fear it may be found to contain mistakes, though I have striven to keep as clear of them as I could.

In a few instances, when uncertain as to the spelling of Indian names, the height of mountains, or such-like, I have referred to other works on Mexico; but, except in such cases, I have not borrowed a single idea or expression from any one; and the merits or demerits of this book are entirely attributable to myself.

From the want of materials, I do not profess to give a detailed account of any one place I passed through; nor to enter, in any way, into statistics: my intention having been merely to give a plain, brief, and straightforward account of what I myself saw, did, and heard, in the various places that I visited.

If this little book has the luck to find its way into the hands of the general public, there will, I fear, be some who may find my description of Tepic and my own doings there somewhat tedious; but to such I would say: 'Tepic and my pursuits while in it, are especially interesting to the friends for whom this book was, in the first instance, undertaken; and I could not omit this part of it without depriving them of all account of my own proceedings during the greater part of my residence in Mexico.'

In conclusion, I do hope that, whatever be the reception of this slight production by the public, it may, at least, prove interesting to those who have already traversed the same ground as myself, and may prove useful to any who are inclined to follow in my footsteps hereafter.

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A TRIP TO MEXICO.

CHAP. I.

THE VOYAGE OUT.

FAREWELL-LUNCHEON—STARTING—SHIP'S FARE—A COMPANION—PASSENGERS—THE AZORES—AMUSEMENTS ON BOARD—MONTE—BERMUDA—TWO DAYS' SIGHT-SEEING—NASSAU—BAHAMA KEYS—HAVANNAH—QUARANTINE—THE TOWN—VOLANTES—NEW PASSENGERS—AN ALARM—MOBILE BAY AND TOWN—ORIZABA—VERA CRUZ—LAND.

TOWARDS the close of Autumn, 1849, there sailed from the good town of Southampton one of the West India mail-packets, bound for Vera Cruz, having on board some fifty other passengers besides myself. We had, of course, all the usual leave-takings, and, in addition, a splendid luncheon which, it appears, is the custom on the departure of every one of these ships. No doubt the friends of most of the passengers left them with easier minds, owing to this precautionary measure, and thought, judging from present appearances—as did my own "Fidus Achates"—that, however sick

nd weary of the sea we might be, we should, at ll events, be consoled by the luxurious dinner which very day awaited us. But, alas, "all is not gold hat glitters;" and we found, in the long run, that he provision made for creature-comforts on board ur otherwise-well-appointed ship, was far from eing in accordance with the luncheon.

Having received the mails with their attendant fficer, we cast off the warp, and soon found urselves fairly outside "The Wight:" the big hip beginning, in the gentlest possible manner, to ntimate to the landsmen they had better turn-in for he night. The next morning we were out of sight f land, with a strong head-wind and heavy sea unning; our breakfast table, of course, was very cantily attended.

Once for all, let me say a word in favour of our ood ship and pleasant officers. The ship herself as very large and commodious, with a most worthy aptain, very kind and attentive to passengers, as were all the officers, without exception. Everything as, indeed, managed in the most cleanly and rderly manner, and the only blot in her whole arrangement was the one alluded to above,—that

of bad living. Whose the fault was, in this particular, I know not; but I do think that passengers, who had paid such high fares as most of us had, were entitled to better food than, as a general rule, we got in our steamer.

Our ship was naturally slow, and, being deep at the commencement of the voyage with coals and cargo, and the weather bad, made only some three or four knots an hour for the first two days. The Company, as far as I have learned, have never been famous for fast ships; it is time, however, they began to think about it, or, before long, our friends on the other side of the Atlantic will not leave them a leg to stand on.

Whilst walking the deck with a fellow-passenger, on the second day after leaving Southampton, and comparing notes as to our destinations, we unexpectedly made the discovery that we were both bound to the same small insignificant town in the far-west of Mexico; and a very pleasant discovery it was on my part. This gentleman had passed much of his life in diplomacy, spoke several languages well, of course Spanish amongst them, and had had great opportunities of seeing much of the

best society in several of the European capitals. I had the pleasure of travelling with him for many miles after we left the ship, and a most delightful companion he proved to be. As I may have occasion to mention him hereafter, let me at once dignify him by the style and title of Mr. JONES, as the last census informs us that there are even more Englishmen of that name than of the family of the immortal "Smith."

For the first week after leaving Southampton the weather continued bad, and the passengers worse: and, it may be here remarked, that wherever I have gone I have noticed that foreigners, and especially those of Spanish origin, are much more affected by sea-sickness than our own countrymen. Our passengers were very mixed as to nation—English, French, German, Spanish, Mexican and others of Spanish origin, American, and one Quadroon—a lady who, poor thing, found out the difference between the "Union Jack" and the "Stars and Stripes," on her arrival at Mobile. I purposely separate the Spaniard from the Mexican, &c., as your true Spaniard of "Old Spain" has a horror of being mistaken for Mexican, Peruvian, &c. &c.

On the ninth day we came in sight of the Azores, and passed through the strait formed by the two northernmost of them, Corvo and Flores. This morning, for the first time, the wind became fair, and the climate seemed to change with it: great coats were discarded; and mine was hardly ever resumed until I repassed the same group of islands on my return, ten months afterwards. These two islands have precipitous, rocky shores, but are, apparently, well cultivated; and from the deck plenty of houses were visible, adorned with the usual quantity of whitewash, for which Spain and Portugal are so famous. Some small waterfalls over the face of the rocks were extremely beautiful.

After passing these islands it was quite curious to observe the way in which the delicious climate and smooth sea, into which we had now entered, worked upon the spirits of the passengers, each in his own way. The French and German part of the community broke out into all manner of national songs, washed down with a goodly allowance of beer and champagne. The English took to shovel-board (a species of marine billiards, amusing enough of the ship rolls handsomely), and a heavy course of

study, beguiling the evening with whist, chess, draughts, &c., whilst the Spaniards, *et id genus omne*, established the never-failing Monté. At this they sat from breakfast to bed-time, merely vacating the table when it was wanted for dinner and tea. This Monté, as is probably known to most people, is the prevailing game of the whole Spanish race in America and the Colonies; and, played as it generally is by them, proves to be one of the most gambling kind. The manner of it is this: the dealer, who is also the banker, turns up, from the bottom of the pack, two cards; on either of these the player deposits his stake; the dealer then shows the next card at the bottom, and if it be of the same value as either of those turned up, he receives, I think, two-thirds of the stake on that one, and the whole of that on the other. If no card of the same value appears, the cards are then withdrawn one by one, and whichever turns up first, wins. It is, I fancy, a fair enough game when fairly played, but with practised hands is open to a deal of cheating. On board the steamer at first they played high, the bank being kept by two Spaniards from Porto Rico, one of whom was a very ill-looking

fellow, and, as he himself admitted, a gambler by profession. We, the majority of the passengers, to whom this pastime was a novelty, were at first contented to look on, and see the doubloons change hands—which, in truth, they did pretty readily. The banker, however, seeing that with such high stakes he could only induce a few of his own countrymen to play, and that these were soon "cleaned out," reduced his "puesto" to smaller coin, such as shillings and half-crowns, and at that price he found plenty of fools among us;—and a very pleasant and exciting style of folly it was, without being a very expensive one. In this pleasant, easy manner, with a sea like glass, and of the colour of the lake of Geneva, we passed our time till the 20th, on the night of which we made the light-house on the highest point of the Bermuda group, and at day-break the next morning hove to, off the entrance to St. George's, to send ashore our mails.

The stopping of the steamer soon brought us all on deck at about half-past seven on a Sunday morning, and for an hour or more we remained nearly stationary, waiting for the return of our mail-boat,

which had entered one end of the strait separating the Island of St. George's from that of Hamilton, to the further end of which we had proceeded, to wait for her. The islands, at first sight, are extremely beautiful, being nearly all covered with a small species of cedar, and plentifully studded with houses. On the return of the boat, we proceeded, under the direction of our black pilot, to thread our way through the circuitous channel among the coral reefs, which led us eventually to the pleasant little island of Ireland—hardly as big as its namesake on this side the Atlantic. This very tortuous channel is the only way of approaching the dockyard and government buildings, and if the buoys were taken up it would be almost an impossibility for any ships, save those with very experienced pilots, to get in at all. The whole group of islands is entirely surrounded with reefs, and this channel is, I believe, the sole access.

At about nine a.m. we entered the harbour, and made fast to the coal wharf,—not a very easy undertaking, owing to the narrowness of the entrance and the immense length of our ship; however, it was done, and to inexperienced eyes well

done to boot. Immediately on touching the wharf we were inundated by crowds of sable beauties, anxious to obtain all the dirty linen with which we might be inclined to trust them. Being pretty well provided on that head, I did not give them any of my custom, and I heard that some of those who did, found, on receipt of their clean garments, put on board of course at the last moment, that the tale of their articles was very different from that which they had delivered on arrival.

The captain informed us that he could not leave before Tuesday morning, so we had two clear days to see all that was to be seen of the "Mudians." Many of the passengers proceeded without delay to HAMILTON, which is the capital, and near which the govneror's residence is situated. Jones, myself, and one or two others determined to remain where we were for the present, and to go to Hamilton the next day. The day was intensely hot, and after breakfast we rambled away far from the dirt and din of the coaling operations, into the cedar woods with which the island is covered. Here, for the first time, we saw houses with verandahs, covered with many coloured creepers, and having gardens

attached full of bananas, papayas, and other tropical fruits.

On returning, in the course of the morning, to the ship, I found that our passengers for St. Thomas, Barbadoes, and the other West India Islands, were being transferred to the steamer waiting for them outside the harbour. I took advantage of one of these trips, made by the boats, to go also, and on my return took the bow oar, rather to the amazement of the proper owner thereof. I wanted exercise, and I certainly got it; a sun of something like 120° Faht., with a boat like a washing-tub, being a different style of thing to what one is accustomed to on the banks or rather water of "Cam and Isis." However, I believe I gave universal satisfaction, and was of course requested to pay my footing: this I did, and returned to the ship rather more like a coal-trimmer than a passenger.

There are some fine government buildings on this island, the chief of which are the barracks, which were then occupied by some companies of the gallant 42d.

The process of coaling had been going on all day, and still continued the next morning, when we

sallied forth to visit Hamilton, We were four in number, Jones, myself, and two others. After a deal of bargaining with some black fishermen,—or, as the "Mudians" prefer calling themselves, "yellow people," though in truth they are quite as far removed from that colour as from light green or prussian blue,—we embarked in a very dirty fishing-boat, with a worthy old gentleman and his two sons, as Charons.

The first visit we paid was to the lighthouse, which stands upon the highest point of the whole group of islands, and from which, we had been told, the view was very beautiful. After a sail of some five or six miles, during the progress of which some of our party, uninitiated in boat-sailing, expressed great fears of arriving in safety, we landed at the foot of the hill on which it is placed, and having taken one of our boys as guide, proceeded to the top. We found a considerable staff of keepers and people connected with the establishment, and a soldier's post at the foot of the tower. The edifice is lofty, and very substantially built, lighted by a series of powerful lamps, constructed on some new principle which, the man informed us, had

not long been sent out from England. The light is very strong, as we could testify from our own experience the first time we saw it; it is visible, they said, at a distance of thirty miles. After having the whole process explained, and being put in possession of the fact that so many glasses were broken every night, and so much oil expended, we adjourned to the external gallery round the top, and enjoyed the view to our hearts' content.

From the elevation of this spot you can see almost the whole of all the islands; some high land at the farther end of St. George's alone preventing one from seeing the sea in every direction. And yet the view does not look like a marine one. It is, indeed, at first difficult to believe that one is in the midst of the Atlantic, and that what land you see is merely so many island-dots on the face of the ocean. To my mind it presented the appearance of a very fine and extensive lake view, and I could almost fancy that, if the horizon had not been hazy, I should have seen a belt of land filling up the background. Hamilton and St. George's are the largest of these islands, and are tolerably well peopled and cultivated. Arrowroot is extensively grown on

them; but, from our present position, only a very small amount of cultivation was to be seen. The islands, we were told, are equal to the days of the year in number, including all, big and little, even single rocks. How this may be I know not; but, as the Americans say, there certainly are "some few."

On descending the tower, our attention was called to the telegraph at its foot, and for the especial benefit of which the post of soldiers is maintained. These telegraphs are scattered over the whole group, and are used by everybody, for a small charge, as a means of communication. In the present instance, for the sum of 2*s.* 6*d.*, we sent an order to Hamilton for the master of the hotel there to have a carriage ready for us to proceed to St. George's. The communication is carried on by means of large balls hoisted in different positions, and each indicating a different number; and we were amused by this grand mode of transmitting our important order.

Having seen what was to be seen, we again embarked in our frail craft, out of which the hot sun had brought the odour of dead fish with increased strength, and pursued our route to Hamilton. These

Bermudian boats are all of one rig, and sail admirably. I think I have only seen them equalled by those of Cadiz, which are rigged much on the same principle. Hamilton "city" is situated upon Hamilton Island, on the side of a very pleasant bay, and having wharves up to the side of the principal street. The bay itself is studded all round with gentlemen's houses. The town is poor enough, though evidently thought much of by its inhabitants: it would answer to a good large English village. Some of the shops are good, and are well supplied with European novelties. Into one of them we went, and procured plenty of books for our onward route.

Our order about the carriage had proved futile, as all the carriages in the town were bespoke, and we had to give up the pleasure of seeing St. George's, and what the inhabitants seem to consider of more importance, a celebrated fish-pond which lay on our road to the former place. The fish, I believe, in this natural salt-water pond are "groopers" of immense size and antiquity, having become tame enough to eat out of the hand. We rambled about the town for an hour or so, had lunch or dinner at an hotel, and returned to Ireland by five o'clock in the afternoon.

After getting rid of the dust with which I was plentifully covered, I joined one of the officers belonging to the ship, and proceeded to the barracks, where we were engaged to dine at mess. We passed a very pleasant evening, and found a change in our diet, not amiss after the usual fare on board our A 1 ship. Next morning, early, I started off for a bath, which I made the most of, although, from apprehensions of sharks probably groundless, I did not enjoy it so much as I might have done. By the time breakfast was over, coaling being finished, and the steam up, off we went, hardly waiting to get rid of our last wheelbarrow. Sunset found us nearly out of sight of land, and we went to bed, some of us thinking we had seen our first and last of Bermuda.

Our time between Bermuda and Nassau was passed in the usual sea-routine manner; rather more intellectually, if anything, than previously, as we had brought a good importation of books with us from Hamilton. However, what we gained in knowledge we lost in amusement, as our Monté friends had taken their leave of us at Bermuda, and no one was found rash enough to put up a table

in their place. Consequently, we ate, read, drank, smoked, and played whist, without intermission, until Saturday night, when the captain began to look anxious, and all and sundry were requested to rub their eyes and look out for the Nassau Light.

We had experienced fine weather until this time, but as the night closed in it became thick and squally. First, the men, whose duty it was, climbed up to the cross-trees, and strained their eyes; next, all the officers of the watch; and, lastly, the captain, girded with his never-failing glass, ascended himself to the top-gallant yard; but all to no purpose—the light being first discovered, owing to the fog, from the deck. We ran close in about twelve p.m., and commenced a regular display of fireworks, firing cannon, and burning rockets and blue lights, regardless of expense. The end of all this was to bring out a pilot, who made his appearance in due season. Then the ship was conducted into a pleasant berth outside the harbour, and we lay-to for some hours to discharge mails and passengers, and take in a fresh supply—and that was all I saw of Nassau.

On turning out next morning, I found we had left at four, and were then running over and through

the numberless shoals that encumber the Providence channel. The lead was kept going nearly all day; but towards the afternoon we went off the principal bank into deep water, the lead finding, if I remember right, at one cast ten fathoms—at the next no bottom. We had low, unhealthy-looking land for some time on our left hand, and the sea breaking over the coral reefs in every direction. We passed in the next two days many lighthouses built on the reefs which are called "keys"—why or wherefore I cannot pretend to say: though, from the names of some of them, they must have been places well known, I imagine, during the war—as, for instance, Double-headed-Shot-Key, Gun-Key, &c. These intricate channels used to be a noted haunt for pirates; and, however the idea may be scouted, I am inclined to believe that there is a stray bird or so of that genus still to be met with in these latitudes.

By breakfast time on Tuesday morning we were in sight of Havannah, having previously passed an American line-of-battle ship, the "Delaware." There was a severe "norther"—one of the gales well known in the gulf—blowing at the time; and owing

to this, the sight of the sea running over the Moro Castle was grand in the extreme. This castle is situated on the right of the harbour, or left as you enter it, on a precipitous rocky cliff many feet above the sea; but in the present instance the water seemed to go bodily over it; and I will answer for it that the sentry on duty at the top had some difficulty in cleaning his firelock after he was relieved.

We lay-to off the harbour for a short time, waiting for a pilot. This worthy, however, did not seem inclined to trust himself outside the bar with such a sea running, so in we went without him, merely handing him a rope in passing. The entrance is very narrow, and so close under the walls of the Moro Castle that all vessels are hailed, both on entering and departing. This seems somewhat of a farce; and so, I presume, thought our captain. I happened to be standing near him on our departure, and heard him remark to himself, not perceiving me, when he had answered the sentry's hail with an inunderstandable growl through his trumpet, "Well, if you understand that, it is more than I do." The pilot, on receiving his rope,

declined to come on board, and informed us that we were in quarantine, which announcement acted as a considerable damper on the spirits of many, who had been consoling themselves with the prospect of eating ices, and going to the opera. Come on board or not, the pilot did his best to make himself useful, and to that end stood up in his boat, towing at the end of some fifty yards of line, calling out incessantly, "Port and starboard!" as if our captain, stationed on the paddle-box, had either time to attend to him, or the faculty of hearing at that distance in a gale of wind, if he had been so inclined.

After passing the narrow entrance we emerged into the harbour, which is very large, and entirely land-locked. Our destiny—worse luck!—led us to the farther end, away from the town, and we let go our anchor in the remotest corner, and hoisted that horrible yellow flag. We were waited upon by the captain of the port and health-boat immediately, and were informed that for two days we must remain where we were, but might land at six o'clock on the morning of the third. We growled and grumbled a good deal, but to little purpose, and

made up our minds to pass our imprisonment as well as might be. The official's boats were, like the pilot's, very careful of defiling themselves by touching such an unclean thing as our ship, or anything connected with her; and though they did take ashore some letters for the friends of some of the passengers, they received them in a pair of tongs at the end of a long pole, and immediately immersed them in a bucket of lime and water. Next came the ceremony of landing the mails, which were all subjected to the same process, with the addition of having a chisel driven through every letter, newspaper, and package, previous to its immersion in the bucket. All went the same road: even well bound books with gilt edges, produced from the recesses of the mail-bags, had their silk and calf maltreated by the merciless chisel. The Spanish authorities regarded this ceremony, which lasted an hour or more, with unmoved gravity, whilst it afforded much amusement to us, who were craning down upon them from the sponson and deck.

The mails gone, we were left to our own unhealthiness and reflections, and had leisure to examine the town and harbour as far as possible with our glasses.

The harbour is nearly circular, and very commodious, a great many vessels lying along the wharves and at anchor, the prevailing flag being the "Stars and Stripes," though before our stay was over, we had another steamer, as big as ourselves, and a frigate, qualified to hoist the "Union Jack." The town is built entirely on the north side of the harbour, and has a peculiar aspect, from its party-coloured appearance, there being extant a law forbidding the inhabitants to whitewash their houses, on account of the glare. Every man, therefore, exercises his own taste in decoration, though bright red and pea-green or light-blue seemed to have rather the preference.

There was already in the harbour, prior to our arrival, another steamer belonging to the company, and in the afternoon the homeward-bound ship from Vera Cruz made her appearance,—some days late, owing to the severe weather in the Gulf. There were a few Spanish men-of-war, and a miniature one lying within stone's throw of us, put there to keep us in our proper place; though, had we be inclined to move, I think a cutter of some twenty-five tons, with two men, a boy, a big dog, and one

musket on board, could hardly have fettered us much. But she was a man-of-war, and fired her musket at sunset, and hauled down her colours, as well as a bigger ship.

The next day we were enlivened a little, by seeing the signal flags working mysteriously on the castle; and one on board, a resident in Havannah, learned in the matter, informed us, that it portended a British frigate; and in the course of the afternoon in she came, and, to our great joy, anchored near us, affording a fresh field for observation, and nearly frightening the ladies into fits when she saluted. The Spaniards returned the salute from a brig of war and the castle; but to our ears, the sound of their guns was very mild compared with the frigate's thirty-twos.

At six the next morning, the embargo being taken off, all hands rushed ashore, with strict injunctions from the captain to be on board at eleven, as he intended to sail, without fail, soon after. I was fortunate enough to have a passage offered me in the boat of a gentleman resident in the town, who took Jones, another Englishman, and myself. He behaved very kindly to us, furnishing us with some

good cigars—rare things in Havannah!—and sending his brother to show us what was worth seeing. After concluding our tobacco-purchases, &c., we proceeded to breakfast; and then, wishing to kill as much as possible in a short time, rushed up one street and down another, till it was time to go on board. Owing to the norther still blowing, the usually hot town of Havannah was delightfully cool, and we rambled about without suffering from heat.

Havannah has a population of 135,000. It is badly and irregularly built, with narrow streets, and a decided want of foot-paths. Many of the houses are fine, and on the whole, it is evidently a thriving bustling place of business. Save this business-like air, it is essentially Spanish, even to the odour of garlic, and other scents with which all Spanish towns are filled. The Plaza de las Armas, or principal square, is fine, and ornamented by trees, among which are conspicuous some magnificent palms; on one side of this square is the palace, the governor's residence. The most striking objects to a stranger are the volantés, a sort of cab, in general use, both public and private. Volantés have only

two wheels, and those of immense diameter, with the body of the carriage protected by a hood let in between them. The driver rides his own horse, and the correct thing is to have another servant behind, on the foot-board. Private vehicles of this description are most splendid in their appointments, the harness being covered with an immense quantity of silver, and the naves of the wheels and other prominent parts of the carriage, being of the same material. The livery of the black who rides is covered with lace, wherever there is room to put it, and his spurs and stirrups are silver. He wears immense gaiters, like jack-boots, which terminate at the ankle, and end above in an immense funnel. On the bit of black leg between the end of the gaiter and beginning of the shoe are fixed the magnificent spurs, many of them worth, I will answer for it, a hundred dollars a pair. The blacks here are all slaves, and do not appear as happy and lively as those in Bermuda; but I think there is little difference between them in point of good looks.

The wharves were lined with vessels of all nations and shapes. Some of the schooners were beautiful, many mounted guns, and one beauty had

twelve long brass guns on her upper deck; I asked if she was a slaver, and was told not—query, what was she?

We had some difficulty in finding our steamer, as she had shifted her berth, in order to finish coaling more easily. This, by the bye, had been a most absurd process on the two previous days. The men navigating the barges which came out to us, were so afraid of being contaminated with our imaginary cholera, that when they got within a hundred yards or so of the ship, all fled into a small boat, and pulled hastily away, leaving the barge a waif on the face of the harbour, to be picked up by our men and brought alongside. Of course an immense deal of time and labour was lost in these operations, and our captain grumbled at them most heartily, and no wonder. The wherries, something between a boat and a canoe, are all furnished with awnings; and into one of these we got, and were rowed alongside, as the ship fired a gun, blew off her steam, and showed other signs of impatience. We nearly left behind two priests and four nuns, passengers for Vera Cruz, and behaved shamefully to a small schooner belonging to the Company, which we

promised to tow out to sea—but didn't. I am afraid, from what I have said of Havannah, that I may lead my readers to fancy it a poor place, and one not worth a second visit. Such, however, was not the impression left on my mind. I have seen no Spanish town at which I would so soon pass some time.

A good many passengers had left us at Havannah, but we had embarked several in their place, who were, of course, something for the old ones to look at, and speculate upon, during our first day at sea. The most prominent of these were the priests and nuns, mentioned above, who had come from Yucatan, having been driven out by the people of colour, and were now bound to Vera Cruz. The gentlemen were Jesuits, and the ladies a species of Sisters of Charity, belonging, I was told, to the order of Nuestra Señora de Loreto. They were very poor, having brought little or nothing with them but their lives, and were indebted, I believe, to charity in Havannah for the means wherewith to proceed to Vera Cruz. When the purser called upon them for their fares, these poor people had no money but silver pesetas, a coin not current anywhere but in

Spain or her colonies. These the purser declined to take; and it was only owing to the remonstrances and arguments of our worthy friend Jones that at last he consented to do so, asseverating vehemently that he should lose by the transaction. They could none of them speak a word of English, and the first day after their arrival, the stewardess came to me to beg I would go and interpret for them. My Spanish was not first-class, and I turned her over to Jones, and thereafter he was the accredited champion of the fair sisters. We had also an American colonel, his wife, and her sister, the latter very pretty; but these ladies seemed to think that we common "Britishers" were not good enough company for them, and I think there was not a passenger on board who could get two words from either of them during our passage. For my part, I at length gave it up as a bad job, but felt a malicious pleasure in seeing the pretty maiden eyeing me with a look of disgust, when I went over from her to talk to the Quadroon lady, who was sitting directly opposite, and who, in New Orleans, would be as so much dirt under the feet of the dainty dame.

The ship's company, as one man, predicted evil

from the advent of the Padres; and, accordingly, the second day at sea, we carried away our jib-boom, and were occupied all day in getting up a new one. During this operation, the chief officer fancying, as men in authority are apt to do, that he could do it better than any one else, remained perched over the end of the bows, to the great delight and admiration of a large shark, who every moment expected him to drop into his mouth. We had fine weather and a fair wind, and save one alarm, which brought the captain on deck one night in a hurry, had nothing to enliven us, until we made Mobile Point on Sunday morning. This one alarm was owing to the officer who had the middle watch, and who was new to the service and latitude, fancying about two in the morning that he could make out the land; he reported this to the captain who rushed on deck instanter, exclaiming "if you can, we shall be ashore before we know where we are." We were at that time abreast of the Florida Light, but many miles distant from it, and the supposed land turned out to be nothing more than the smoke and hull of a large steamer, the "Ohio," on her way from New Orleans to New York.

At nine o'clock on Sunday the 4th, we anchored just inside the two lighthouses which are placed at the entrance to Mobile Bay. This entrance is narrow, with a nasty bar; but the bay opens out beautifully after you get inside. A small steamer came alongside immediately, and the mails, passengers, and cargo for Mobile, New Orleans, &c., were transferred to her, the depth of water preventing large vessels from going up to the town. I expected to meet a large party of friends here to join us, and, along with two or three other passengers desirous of seeing the town, put myself on board the smaller steamer and we proceeded up the bay. Mobile is distant nearly thirty miles from the anchorage; and owing to the slowness of our wretched little steamer, we did not get there till three in the afternoon. The bay is very wide, and wooded on both sides, though in many places you cannot see across it. It is formed by the mouth of the Mobile river, which runs into the upper end, and which brings down immense quantities of timber, forming "snags" and "sawyers" all over it. We passed a great many ships of large tonnage, which could not get up to Mobile; to these the cotton is brought

down in steamers, several of which, laden with this article, we met in our upward passage. The little steamer was high-pressure, and very ricketty in point of boilers. I was glad to get out of her, and I think with reason. The engineer of our own ship gave me afterwards an amusing account of a trip he had had in a similar craft, the chief features of which were that they worked at a pressure of a hundred and thirty pounds to the square inch, and forgot, or did not care, to blow off their steam when the vessel stopped, which she did every ten minutes to repair the engine. The engineer, honest man, was professionally much shocked, and told me he never felt so happy in his life as when he once more got back on board his own ship.

During our upward passage we met the "California," bound for New Orleans, a hurricane-decked fast boat, and crowded with people. She stopped to take on board what passengers we had for that place, and as, perhaps, some of my friends would like to see a Yankee captain on Sunday, and compare him with his brother of a Gravesend steamer, I will here sketch one in outline:—Imagine a respectable, sober-looking man, dressed in a full suit of black, the waistcoat

satin, his hair half way down his back, a round hat with much brim, and a pair of gold spectacles on his nose—and you have the captain of the "California." Our Quadroon lady here left us, and, shame be it spoken, was not allowed to go into the cabin, but shoved forward among the pigs and sheep, in company with other people of colour. Such is one of their "Almighty Institutions."

I found all my friends at Mobile, and ascertained that we were to return at eight o'clock in the evening. Mobile is a large new American town, with some 70,000 or 80,000 inhabitants, and new houses springing up like mushrooms in every direction; but Americans are so fond of "going ahead," and doing a great deal in a short time, that they never do it well; and the town was in as beastly a state of mud and filth, from want of paving and sewage, as I should wish to see anywhere. I went to the principal hotel to look for my friends, and found an enormous house, with immense long rooms, at that time filled with a tea-table-d'hôte in full swing. My friends preferred having their meals in their own apartments, and were made to pay handsomely for the exclusiveness. On the ground

floor was an enormous species of gin-palace, where the national drinks were served out—I do not know how many gallons a minute—to the eager crowd of long-haired expectorating gentlemen awaiting them. I was prepared to find civilization in the Southern states rather different from what it is in Europe; but I did not think that one town would furnish such an exact exemplification of all the monstrosities mentioned in Martin Chuzzlewhit; but so it is.

We embarked again about eight, on our downward passage, taking nearly fifty passengers, to join our ship. We had a most wretched night, and reached the ship about half-past two in the morning, having narrowly escaped destruction on a "snag," against which we ran with a severe shock. I was walking on the hurricane deck during the night, when the captain accosted me with the inquiry—"Do you know to whom all that luggage belongs?" I replied, "Yes; the greater part of it belongs to a friend of mine, who is on board with his family." Whereupon the captain remarked, interrogatively, "I guess he is a very rich man?" "Possibly," said I. "Is he one of *those titled men?*" emphasizing the word *titled* with much scorn, added the captain. I told

him no; whereupon he turned his tobacco, and appeared easier. The confusion on board our own ship on arrival was terrific, owing to the number of applicants for cabins. I had luckily arranged everything with the purser before, for my friends, and after seeing them all snugly stowed, I turned in myself, well tired.

Next morning found us running through the discoloured water that comes down from the Mississippi, and tinges the blue sea of the Gulf for many miles. The weather continued lovely and wind fair; nothing occurred to disturb the "even tenour of our way;" and on the fourth morning after leaving Mobile Point, the splendid peak of Orizaba, a snow-mountain, 17,350 feet above the sea, and 2000 feet higher than Mont Blanc, was visible from the deck at sunrise. Some of the charitable ladies we had on board, assisted by the indefatigable Jones, got up a subscription for the poor nuns, and were very successful, though I forget the amount collected. By a curious coincidence I and some others made a collection on board the same steamer on my return home, for a very different object, and on a much more melancholy

occasion; but that in its right place. About two o'clock we came in sight of the whole line of coast. Orizaba had long been hidden among the clouds, and the most prominent feature among the high land was now the Cofre de Peroté (so called from a large mass of porphyry shaped like a trunk on the top of the mountain), which, although 13,415 feet above the sea, is, from its low latitude, destitute of snow. By half-past three on the 9th of November we anchored inside the castle of St. Juan de Ulloa, and my outward voyage was over.

CHAP. II.

VERA CRUZ TO MEXICO.

VERA CRUZ — LANDING — HOSPITALITY — ZOPILOTES — MEXICAN HOUSES—THE LITERA—OCCUPATION—MODE OF LIVING—HOUSE-TOPS—DEPARTURE—THE DILIGENCE—ESCORT—SCENERY—PLAN DEL RIO—XALAPA—DOMESTIC ANIMALS IN MEXICO—PULQUE—PEROTE — PUEBLA — A ROBBERY — POPOCATEPETL — VALLEY OF MEXICO—MEXICO.

VERA CRUZ is sadly destitute of harbour, the anchorage being a mere roadstead; it is protected, however, by the shoals outside, and by the castle of St. Juan de Ulloa, which stands on a small island facing the town. The nearest good anchorage is Sacrificios, some miles to the southward; and it is here that men-of-war and large vessels generally lie.

The confusion on board immediately on our anchoring was very great, and one ran a risk of being knocked on the head by the huge iron-bound portmanteaus which were travelling in every direction, or being built up in the mound of luggage intended for Tampico. A gentleman in authority soon made his appearance and demanded our pass-

ports, though it was quite immaterial whether you had one or not. Jones, for some reason best known to himself, would not show his, though he was properly provided, and he landed with impunity along with the rest of us. The official seemed surprised at my informing him I was not a "comerciante," and seemed to fancy I must have mistaken my own identity, no one ever coming to Mexico for any other purpose than that of trade.

I was now under the wing of the gentleman who had come on board at Mobile, and gave up all thought or care of myself or baggage. I received, however, on landing, a letter recommending me to the care of a mercantile house in Vera Cruz, who were also friends of my protector. The captain of the Port very politely sent his boat (very large and commodious with a comfortable awning) for us, and we went ashore in great style, leaving all the baggage to be taken to the custom-house by the servants. Our party consisted of four ladies, two children, and seven gentlemen, among whom I include Jones and a very pleasant and agreeable Russian gentleman who had joined us at Mobile. Two houses were placed at the disposal of our leader,

one of them being the house to which I had my letter of recommendation. It was finally settled that the ladies, children, and one gentleman should go to one house, whilst the rest of us took up our abode at the other. Should any of the gentlemen connected with the latter ever see this, I beg to thank them most cordially for the attention and kindness I received from them during my stay under their hospitable roof.

Travelling in Europe, *i. e.* in the beaten tracks in Europe, gives you no notion of what to expect when you reach a country like Mexico. Here there are no inns, or next to none, save at the regular stopping-places of the Diligences, and consequently it becomes almost a matter of necessity that hospitality should be practised on a liberal scale. For my own part, while in Mexico, go where I would, I invariably found the greatest kindness in this respect from both Englishmen and Natives; and I am sure that any one who has a friend competent to give him a letter of introduction to a house in the first town he comes to, need afterwards never be obliged to take up his abode at an inn in any other, except from choice. At least such was my case.

The castle of St. Juan de Ulloa might be made a strong place, and it once was so; but at present it is, like all Mexican institutions, much inclined to decay, and wants a liberal supply of men, guns, and whitewash. We landed at a good enough jetty, and proceeded to our quarters, through some very dirty streets, many of the houses on our path bearing visible signs of decay. In the first square we entered were lying some immense pieces of machinery, brought from England and America for mills and other manufactories in Mexico; but, from the badness of roads and supineness of the people, they had been placed there at their first landing, and I have little doubt they are lying there still. Vera Cruz, on the whole, is a better town than I had been led to hope, but it does not equal the expectations formed from first seeing it from the sea. It is full of churches, and the towers of these, from the sea, give it the appearance of a much finer place than it is in reality. However, many of the streets are good and tolerably clean, though cleanliness is certainly not the prevailing feature in Mexico

The town swarms with zopilotés (Turkey buzzards) and pigs, which are the universal scavengers

throughout the republic, and useful indeed they are. Every church in Vera Cruz had always half a score of zopilotés sitting on it, peering into the streets below; and did a maid-servant but empty a pail of dirty water out of a first-floor window, twenty of these fellows pounced at once into the flood, to look if there was anything thrown away that would suit them. Most quick and expeditious are they with their work, even when the subject operated upon is large. I have seen a horse give his last gasp at three or four o'clock in the afternoon, and when I passed the same way betimes the next morning, nothing was left but bones, and those disjointed, and flung in every direction.

Mexican houses are mostly all alike, and I will describe one, once for all. You enter by a large doorway, wide enough to admit a carriage, and find yourself in a large courtyard, or "patio," with the house built round it. Generally, except in large towns, there is only one story; when two, or more, the family commonly live in the first floor, and the ground story is occupied by warehouses, counting-houses, &c. Most houses have, in addition, a court-yard behind, which contains the kitchens and

other offices; sometimes there is another yard, or "corral," behind all, which contains the stabling, and is large enough to accommodate a great many animals. All houses are flat-roofed, and paved with a species of plaster over the bricks. This plaster, in a short time, becomes very hard, and being polished with rough stones, until it is as smooth as marble, forms an impervious roof against the rain. Every house is furnished with immense long horizontal pipes or gutters, projecting over the street, and through which all the rain collected on the roof is carried off. During the rainy season, or in a good heavy storm, these pipes are so many small cataracts, and it is impossible to walk through the streets without being half-drowned.

I remained in Vera Cruz for four days, and considered myself lucky in getting away so soon; the Diligence at that time only going every other day, though now there is a daily one. A certain number of places had been secured beforehand for our party in the first two which were to start after the arrival of the packet. The ladies and children departed the day after our arrival, in "literas," for Xalapa, and some of the gentlemen followed them the same

evening in the Diligence. The "litera" is the most luxurious mode of travelling I have seen, and I fancy it must be confined to the neighbourhood of Vera Cruz, not having noticed it elsewhere in Mexico. It is merely a sort of four-post bed, plentifully furnished with pillows, carried by two mules, one before and the other behind, in shafts. A quantity of spare mules are always taken, and by changing frequently, a good pace is maintained throughout the journey. In the present instance, the ladies left about five o'clock on Saturday, and arrived in Xalapa, distant some eighty miles, by the middle of the day on Sunday.

During our stay in Vera Cruz the heat was intense, and mosquitoes very troublesome, and it was impossible to stir out with any comfort during the day. In the evening we used to go and walk in the Alameda, which is a poor affair, but the only place fitted for a promenade, the city on all sides being surrounded by a waste of sand. The theatre was open, with a tolerably good company; but it required the constitution of a Vera-Cruzano to stand the heat. They have also a sort of club, with papers, journals, billiards, &c., a pleasant enough

lounge in the evening, and to which strangers are introduced by a member.

The season for fever was over when we arrived; but I was told that all strangers, sooner or later, get it; and lucky is he who gets through with only the loss of his hair. The most curious thing I heard touching this complaint was, that a person born in Vera Cruz, and carried to Europe or elsewhere a child, without having had the fever, would, on his return, though he remained away twenty years, be as free from all likelihood of taking it as the man who had lived in the midst of the "Vomito" all his life; on the other hand, strangers never escape.

One of the luxuries you meet with at Vera Cruz is a large species of fish (I forget the name), which is most capital, and which made his appearance every day for breakfast and dinner, whilst I was there. Apropos of eating and drinking, I may as well mention the manner in which those processes, so necessary to life, are conducted among the better classes in Mexico. You are waked about six or seven by a servant with chocolate, which is beautifully prepared, but not equal, I think, to the same article in Spain. You are then supposed to get up,

and go about your business till breakfast, generally between ten and eleven. This meal is a good, honest, early dinner of fish, often soup, and hot meats of all kinds, tea and coffee being introduced only into Anglicised houses, the natives always drinking wine—mostly bad Bourdeaux. Butter is nearly unknown throughout Mexico; and one would miss it much at first, were it not for the training one has on board the steamer, where the oily, salt mass presented you at the table in hot latitudes, makes one think that none is preferable to such a substitute. Dinner takes place either at three or four, and coffee and cigars follow immediately. There is no other regular meal; but in most houses, now, one sees tea à l'Anglais during the evening.

One day, during our stay at Vera Cruz, I ascended to the azotea or roof of our house, which was furnished with a small tower, like most of its neighbours, and from which I had a most splendid view: and here I would advise all travellers in Mexico never to omit to climb the roof of some house when in a town, as they may be sure to be rewarded by a fine view, no ridge tiles or other extraneous matters, such as chimnies, intervening. Vera Cruz

stands in a sandy desert, on one side the sea, on the other an immense range of mountains, well wooded, with the mighty Orizaba in the background.

At length, on Monday evening, the 14th, we bid adieu to our kind entertainers, and took our seats in the Diligence. This vehicle holds nine inside and one beside the coachman. Our party consisted of Jones, the Russian gentleman, and myself, in one lot; four German miners, going to the Real del Monte mine, one other Englishman, and two servants. The Diligences throughout Mexico are all the property of one individual, a Spaniard, and a most spirited man he is: they are all built in the United States, and are admirably adapted for the service. The body of the carriage, in place of having C, elliptical, or grasshopper springs, as with us, rests upon two broad leather straps, fastened before and behind to wooden projections rising from the bed. They are very strong, and the whole contrivance admirably adapted for Mexican roads. All the travelling carriages in Mexico are built on the same plan, which I am told is precisely the same that prevailed in England, or at least in Scotland, only sixty or seventy years since. The private carriages are

generally drawn by six or eight horses or mules, the postboys riding. For town use, however, especially in the city of Mexico, English or French carriages supersede all others. The Diligence has three seats, and three persons sit upon each seat, those in the middle row having a leather strap for their backs, moveable for the convenience of the passengers sitting behind them. The doors are like ordinary carriage doors in England, and the seats placed across the vehicle. The rain and dust are kept out by means of leather curtains, rolled up at the pleasure of the passenger. The horsing of the Diligences, and finding lodging and board for the passengers, are all in the hands of the proprietor; and I should imagine he derives a large income from this source, though the outlay must be enormous.

We started with great pomp and ceremony in tow of ten mules, and went the first two hundred yards at a great pace; at the gate of the town, however, we pulled up, and were requested to pay for the escort which was to accompany us—a very necessary precaution in such a country as Mexico. My friends had no arms with them, and I had left mine for company's sake in my carpet-bag; but, on

perceiving next morning that our fellow-passengers, the Germans, were furnished with rifles, &c., I took the first opportunity to withdraw my pistols from their repository. An English resident in Vera Cruz told me, that during the war the Diligence in which he was travelling was robbed between Vera Cruz and Xalapa by a picket of cavalry in uniform, one of the passengers being the general in command of the district! It is as well to mention, that the Diligence will only allow twenty-five pounds of luggage for each passenger, and the rest must be sent by the common "arrieros," or muleteers. This regulation I found subsequently a dreadful nuisance, as I subsisted for three months on one carpet-bag, never beholding my portmanteaus, left at Vera Cruz on the 9th of November, until the end of February.

Once outside the town we entered the sand and plodded on for a couple of hours or so at a foot's pace. Our escort were an original-looking set of rascals, with the slightest possible resemblance to soldiers. One of them, just outside the town, whether from accident or otherwise, fired off his pistol, and put our armed Germans into a great

state of commotion. The escort took their leave of us at some distance from the town, and used many words in trying to persuade us that had it not been for their invaluable presence, not a stiver would have been remaining in our pockets by that time. Once out of the sand we got into a kind of lane with high banks, the whole lit up every here and there with fireflies; and so we jogged on until sleep found some of us out.

When day broke we found ourselves in the midst of a sort of jungle, the road which we were travelling looking like the bed of a mountain torrent, and quite as uneasy to travel. This road, in the time of the Spaniards, was very good, and the traveller sees many traces of its past goodness in the huge blocks of stone which have got loosened from their bed, and are now scattered over it in every direction. But in regard to Mexican roads generally, let my readers understand that they are unrivalled in badness in any part of the world which it has been my luck to see; and I am sure if any English gentleman was to request his coachman to drive over any of the highways which are daily traversed in the republic, the man would give him warning on the spot.

During this day's journey we saw very few large trees; but an infinity of creepers and plants of every description, the whole covered with most brilliant flowers. The Cactuses, however, are the most striking; their height varying from one to thirty feet: few of them were in flower at that period. The commonest sorts are the prickly pear, and one that grows perfectly straight in a hexagonal form; of this last, nearly all the hedges are made in the neighbourhood of the capital. The plants grow close together and are quite impervious to man or beast.

We saw little cultivation this day, and had proceeded many miles before we met with any at all. About nine we stopped to breakfast at the Plan del Rio, a small village a little on the Xalapa side of the Puente Nacional. Close to this place are the ruins of a beautiful bridge which was destroyed during the late war, by a patriotic Mexican general who hoped thereby to stop the progress of the Americans; but he reckoned without his host, such a trifling obstacle only detaining the army a quarter of an hour. Our breakfast was purely Mexican, and good withal; plenty of eggs, tomatoes, and

meat in all manner of shapes and strongly flavoured with garlic.

In the course of the afternoon, as we advanced, the country became better cultivated and more populous; and we passed close to a large Hacienda or estate belonging to Santa Anna. During the whole of the day we had been gradually ascending and getting out of the Tierra Caliente; and about seven in the evening we reached Xalapa which is rather more than 4300 feet above the sea. The scenery had all along been most beautiful; a high range of mountains, the whole way on the left hand, and Orizaba still towering above them all.

Throughout the whole of Mexico the quantity of domestic animals one sees is prodigious, and this being our first day in the country, we were much struck by the novelty. Pigs, dogs, and poultry, especially turkeys, literally swarm. Let the hut be ever so miserable, or its inhabitants ever so poor, still there are always enough of these animals about it, to stock an ordinary village in England. No puppies are ever drowned, and that fact easily accounts for the multiplication of the dogs. No pigs are ever eaten, and that may or may not account for

the number of them: but still they do not die a natural death, being bred and reared entirely for the lard they produce. I am quite posed to account for the number of turkeys, as the natives certainly eat them, and freely too—and not without reason, for on table they are much finer than English, and have a great quantity of fat.

We rejoined the rest of the party, who preceded us, at Xalapa, or Jalapa,—probably not commonly known as the town from which jalap was first brought and named. Jones and I took up our abode with our friends, who were in a house distinct from the Diligence-Hotel, leaving our Russian friend to stop at the latter. The diligence did not travel the next day, and I employed myself in walking about the town and suburbs. I here saw, for the first time, some of those beautiful white, bell-shaped flowers, called Floripundios; they had a delicious scent, but were always filled with flies and ants. The bush on which they grow is of a good size, and all the hedges of the neighbourhood were filled with it. Jalapa is prettily situated, and is much esteemed by Mexicans, on account of its reputed fine climate; but, for my own part, I found it, during the night, very cold and

damp. The streets are poor, and it is a place of no importance, except as being the first habitable town away from the coast.

Before the diligence started the next morning I made a pilgrimage to the roof of the hotel, and was rewarded by a most lovely view, having Orizaba for its chief feature, surrounded by lesser mountains beautifully wooded. Our party in the diligence was the same as before, the rest of our friends preferring to follow us to Mexico by easy stages. Immediately on leaving the town we began again to ascend, and a severe pull of some five or six miles brought us to the top of a steep hill, the view from which, on looking back, was magnificent. It was, indeed, though quieter, more extensive and lovelier than anything I had seen in Switzerland. For some distance after this ascent the road continued upon pretty level ground, winding in and out among the mountains, here covered with pine forests.

We passed through the centre of a district in which the Maguey, or large American Aloe, is extensively cultivated for the manufacture of Pulque. Pulque is the common drink of all Mexicans, and answers to our beer, though more intoxicating. All who once

get accustomed to the smell and taste, like it much, and it is even said to become necessary to people, after they have used it for many years. When the Republic was first established, many old Spaniards threatened with expulsion, petitioned the National Assembly to allow them to remain in Mexico, the groundwork of the petition being that they had been so long accustomed to drink Pulque (not procurable in Spain), that their lives would be endangered if they left it off. The manner of making this drink is as follows: When the aloe is just on the point of throwing up its huge stem from its coronet of leaves, deep amidst which its broad basis had been for some time forming, the farmer or gardener scoops out the whole pith, leaving the outer rind, and thus making, inside the circle of leaves, a bowl-like cavity about two feet deep and eighteen inches wide, according to the size of the plant. This cavity is soon filled with the sap which should have gone to nourish the stalk, and as it flows is removed several times daily for some months, or as long as the tap yields. A portion of this juice (called honey-water, *aguamiel*) is set apart to ferment and act as a sort of leaven or yeast for the rest. This is called Madre-Pulque, the mother of pulque,

and when completely prepared (which it is in about a fortnight), a small portion of it is added to the skins or tubs containing the fresh aguamiel, and sets it fermenting in a day or so. A large plant is said to yield from ten to fifteen pints daily, and this for months. Others vary the process by putting a small quantity of *mescal* into the cavity in the plant to mix with the sap as it flows in; and this seems to answer very well. This process of milking the Aloe is, as might be expected, a fatal one to the plant, but before it dies it always throws out shoots which keep up the stock. The fermentation is usually conducted in skins, and as soon as this is over the Pulque is fit for drinking. To strangers both the taste and smell are horrible, something of the style of rotten eggs; but one soon gets accustomed to the flavour. The fresh sap, or aguamiel, is often drunk unprepared, but it is too humble a tipple to be generally patronised.

These Aloes are often of immense size. The common leaves are eight or ten feet in length, more than a foot in width, and thick in proportion. The stem often shoots up to twenty or thirty feet or more, and is as thick as a man's body.

During this day's journey we crossed many volcanic tracts, among the lava ruins of which cactuses innumerable were flourishing. Indeed, throughout Mexico I have remarked that these plants grow better in similar spots than anywhere else. Our resting-place, a dull, little town, called Peroté, was reached about four o'clock in the afternoon, after a trifling descent into the high table-land plain in which it stands. This little place has the reputation of being the dullest, coldest, and most miserable residence of any in Mexico, and I am not inclined to disagree with those who abuse it. We had miserable quarters there. I must, however, bear witness to one thing, in which Peroté surpasses all the rest of Mexico that I saw, viz. the goodness of its potatoes. These are here capital, equal to the best in England, whilst, in general, throughout Mexico, they are wretched, seldom bigger than walnuts.

At a short distance from the town there is a castle, which, within the last ten years, has been a place of some notoriety, from its having been used as a prison for a number of Texans, who were taken prisoners during a most unprovoked raid into

Mexico. A General Green, who was one of them, in a very bad book written by himself, gives a most melancholy account of their sufferings; and tells us, among other things, how, at one place, they were decimated and shot by the Mexicans. They certainly seem to have undergone a good deal; but their attack on Mexico was the most unprovoked thing according to the General's own showing: and it struck me, that he and his companions, if in Europe, under like circumstances, would have been hung without mercy. Some of those prisoners at last made their escape, and among them their historian. A very pathetic incident is said to have taken place during this decimation, one brother voluntarily taking the place of another who had drawn the fatal bean.

All diligences in Mexico start at about four in the morning, stopping to breakfast, if the day's journey is a long one. They are so arranged that every night two meet at the same stopping-place, and it is pleasant enough to hear from the passengers of the diligence going the other way, what one may expect the next day on the road. We had found it very cold during the night; and in the

early part of the morning we saw ice: it was extremely cold in the diligence. We were now entering upon the territory subject to robbers, and prepared our pistols accordingly. We were furnished with escorts nearly all day, for which a charge of not more than two rials (a shilling) from each passenger is demanded. I would have been sorry to have formed one of the escort at that price, as they often ran an imminent risk of being shot by the passengers, looking as they did very like ladrones in the dusk of the morning.

We passed through several villages, but none of any importance; still, during this day's journey, we saw a good deal of cultivation and plenty of houses. Much of the route was through a fine grassy plain, with small conical hills scattered over it in every direction, and appearing at first sight as if they could be removed at pleasure. Orizaba was in full view on our left hand all day, and very close to us. Towards the afternoon his two snow-covered brethren, Popocatepetl (17,715 feet above the sea), and Iztaccihuatl (15,700), appeared in front and beyond Puebla, to which we were bound, and which we reached about four in the afternoon. During

this day we saw great quantities of the "Arbol del Peru," growing by the side of the road. This is a beautiful tree of the acacia tribe, with long, drooping crimson flowers; it is a native of Peru, but is now naturalized in Mexico, and is met with all over the Republic.

Immediately on our arrival in Puebla, we hurried to the cathedral, but found we were too late, it being already closed for the day. I was greatly disappointed, having heard much of it, and its outside certainly warranted the expectation of seeing something good within. Puebla (strictly called Puebla de los Angeles) is a fine large town, containing about 70,000 inhabitants. It is reckoned the third in Mexico; though in point of architecture, cleanliness, good streets, and business-like appearance, I am inclined to give it the first place. The Grand Plaza, on one side of which stands the cathedral, is very large, and surrounded on its other three sides by portales or corridors, full of shops and stalls, tenanted by old ladies selling dulces (sweetmeats), figures of rags (for which Puebla is famous), and all manner of nic-nacs.

These dulces of Puebla are much prized, and are, like those in Guadalaxara, the work of the nuns.

Jones during the evening, wishing to procure some made of the sweet potato, we hunted all over the town for them, but to little purpose; till, at last, we were told that if anybody had them, it was an old lady with a stall, in a doorway of some dirty ruinous old place. To her, accordingly, we went, and were furnished with our delicacies at a great price; though I should have as soon thought of applying to the man who sells pies at the top of the Haymarket for a basin of turtle soup. Puebla is a very religious or fanatic town, and swarms with nuns and friars of all descriptions. I was told many of the convents were worth seeing, but my time would not allow me to stop.

On returning to our hotel, we were met by the servant of one of our fellow-passengers in the steamer, who, coming by the town of Orizaba, had fallen among thieves; however, they behaved very decently to him, and only took the half of what he possessed; they carried out their principle, so far as to take two shirts out of four. Luckily, three or four gold watches of his master's, concealed in his pockets, were not discovered.

We got a reasonably good dinner at the diligence

table-d'hote, and afterwards took another stroll about the town. The scene in the Plaza was very striking; the whole place being covered with booths and stalls, belonging to crowds of half-naked Indians, each having his own fire of pine-wood chips, blazing like gas, and giving out a most delicious odour. The sale of fruits and vegetables of all kinds appeared very large, and I was much puzzled with their variety and novelty. I regretted much not being able to remain a day or two at Puebla (as our Russian friend did), there being much in the city and neighbourhood worth visiting. Not least interesting are the ruins and pyramids of Cholula, the most sacred of all Mexican cities in old Montezuma's time, and where many relics are still to be seen.

The next morning at four saw us in the diligence again, and with another in company, in which was contained the body of the Governor of Puebla—I mean, of course, alive—owing to which distinguished honour we were provided with an escort of regular soldiers all the way to Mexico. As soon as day broke we saw our two snow-mountains, Popocatepetl and Iztaccihuatl, in front of us, and,

like the mountains in Switzerland, brilliantly illuminated with the sun's rays long before they reached us in the valley. These mountains were originally all volcanoes; and I believe smoke has been seen issuing from Orizaba and some of the others in modern times. According to an old Spanish authority I met with in Mexico, Popocatepetl was an active volcano at the time of the conquest. I was told that a Frenchman, repeating the experiment of Cortes's officer, in a more formal style, had lately established some works for extracting sulphur, in the very crater of the volcano, and that he was reaping large profits from his speculation. How he managed to get his machinery up, or his sulphur down, among all that snow and ice, to say nothing of roads, I can't think.

We proceeded for some distance through a finely cultivated plain, having the pyramids of Cholula visible on our left hand. After passing through one or two smallish towns, we at length entered a magnificent pine forest, called the "Black Forest," the scene of two-thirds of the highway robberies in Mexico. The roadside was thickly sprinkled with crosses, either in memory of those who fell by the hands of the Ladrones, or of the Ladrones themselves, who are often executed when caught on the

spot where the robbery takes place. Our escort buzzed about among the trees most industriously, but nothing came of it, and at length we reached Rio Frio, and breakfasted at twelve o'clock: a good stretch, I can tell my friends it is, from half-past three in the morning till twelve at noon, on one cup of chocolate. The inn at Rio Frio is kept by a German, who relieved our wants substantially. After breakfast we started again; and a mile or so more brought us to the top of a steep hill, and then began the descent into the valley of Mexico.

As we got out of the forest the view at once opened upon us; and it is unquestionably one of the finest sights one will see in a lifetime: an immense valley, some fifty miles long by upwards of thirty broad, surrounded by magnificent mountains, with two large lakes and several smaller ones, scattered over it. In Montezuma's time the valley was nearly all lake; but the water has now contracted very much, and but a small specimen remains of what it once was. We descended very rapidly, and after reaching the bottom, some thirty miles of flat dusty road brought us to Mexico. This valley, fine as it is, has little cultivation, and appears to produce more snipes and

wild ducks than anything else. One of the lakes is salt, and we passed a sort of marsh covered with salt pans. There are several small villages through which the diligence passes, but we saw nothing worthy of remark in any of them.

We entered Mexico about six in the evening, by a wretched street, so bad that a stranger would be more inclined to fancy himself entering a stable-yard than the capital of a great nation. A soldier immediately joined us, and rode, to my great horror, on our side of the carriage with his carbine full-cock. He accompanied us as far as the Plaza, and would not take his leave until properly feed. I fancied that this was some custom-house regulation, but was afterwards credibly informed that were it not for this protection, such as it is, the diligence would be as likely to be robbed, even in the town, as not. We drove into the diligence yard and found some friends awaiting us; and right glad we were to have their assistance in placing us in the Hotel Bazaar, when they left us to get rid of the dust with which we were covered.

CHAP. III.

THE CITY OF MEXICO.

SITE—HOUSES AND STREETS—PUBLIC BUILDINGS—CATHEDRAL—PALACE — MUSEUM — COSTUMES — MINERIA — CONVENTS — THE HOST—AMUSEMENTS—THEATRE—PASEO—CLUB—CHAPULTEPEC —TACUBAYA—MEXICANS AT HOME—LOWER CLASSES—ROBBERS —ROBBERIES — ASSASSINATION — SANTA GUADALUPE — SAN AUGUSTIN.

I remained for three weeks in the city of Mexico, and had therefore ample time for seeing all that is interesting in it. The first week Jones and myself remained at the Hotel Bazaar, a very good establishment, with a French restaurant attached to it, the whole kept by M. Arago, a brother of the Parisian astronomer. The last fortnight of my stay I removed to the house of the friends whom we had left behind at Xalapa, and who had only then arrived in Mexico.

Mexico is a large city, with upwards of 150,000 inhabitants. It lies in N. Lat. 19·25, and W. Long. 101°, and has an elevation of 7426 feet above the sea. It is built on the precise site of the ancient

TENOCHTITLAN, the capital of Montezuma, captured and destroyed by Cortez, in the year 1521. The ancient city, as is well known, was surrounded by the lake which has now retreated about a league from it. It was only accessible by causeways, stretching to it in different directions from the shore, some of them being no less than six miles in length. These causeways still exist, and constitute raised roadways running through the half-marshy soil that once formed the bottom of the lake.

The modern city retains much of the plan of its predecessor—the same long, wide, and perfectly straight streets, the same squares, and the same sites of the public buildings. As the city was rebuilt by Cortes, only two years after its destruction, and while the lake was yet undiminished, the original canals, bridges, &c., were necessarily retained; and the old names are still preserved, though now no longer pertinent to places on dry land. Thus we have the "Calle del Puente de" so and so, and such like names of the streets. The position of the city, though sadly shorn of the nearer beauties it presented when surrounded by its lake, is still mag-

nificent in relation to its surrounding scenery and prospects. The grand valley in which it is situated, as formerly stated, is upwards of fifty miles long, and from thirty to forty broad, and is everywhere bounded by an unbroken chain of lofty mountains, girding it and its lakes like a wall, with the majestic Popocatepetl towering over all. Owing to the straightness of the streets, some portion of this mountain boundary is visible from every quarter of the city, and from the extreme clearness of the atmosphere, the most distant part of the chain seems almost as if it abutted on the vista of houses through which you are looking.

Many of the streets are very good, and most of them tolerable. Many of the houses are also fine; some even splendid. They are mostly three stories high, and have galleries on their fronts; they are usually built of brick, or of "adobé," unburnt brick; very few are of stone. The house of Cortes, and many of the original buildings erected at the restoration, still remain.

Still, on the whole, Mexico is not a city to please a stranger. It is badly paved, abominably dirty, and rendered disgusting by its hordes of Lazzaroni

(Leperos), said to be the greatest rascals on the face of the earth.

In the heart of the city is the Grand Square (Plaza Mayor), perhaps as large as Lincoln's Inn Fields. On one side of this stands the Cathedral, on another the Palace. The other two sides are made up of portales, the same as at Puebla. The Cathedral is a large handsome church, standing upon exactly the same spot as stood the chief temple (Teocalli) of the Astecs before the conquest. Into one side of it is built an enormous circular stone, about twelve feet in diameter, covered with hieroglyphics, and purporting to be a perpetual calendar used by the original occupants of the city. Its ancient name is *Kellenda*, and it is popularly called Montezuma's watch. This and the great sacrificial stone of the Teocalli, are almost the only relics that remain of the great nation that passed away at the coming of the Spaniards.

The Cathedral contains a few good pictures, and some magnificent railing round the altar, said to be a compound of gold and silver. Taken as a whole, however, I should say that the Cathedral of Mexico is externally inferior to that of Puebla, and is much disfigured by whitewash, from which that of Puebla

is free: it is certainly not to be compared, either externally or internally, with most of our cathedral churches in England. The floor is much spoiled by being covered with wooden planks, which have become very rotten and unsightly.

The Palace, close by, is a splendid building and very large, containing, under one roof, the whole of the Government offices, as well as the residence of the President and the chambers of the National Assembly. These chambers are very poor for such a purpose. The Palace, being the head quarters of the Government, has guards mounted at the different entrances, and a certain degree of state and formality is kept up. The soldiers on duty, however, are the most wretched specimens of their class: it was ludicrous in the extreme to see them drawn up in line for the purpose of telling off the different guard,—some with crossbelts, some without, some with shakos, some with broad-brimmed hats. The same rule would apply to nearly all their garments and appointments. There is, however, an efficient National Guard in Mexico of 4000 men, 400 of whom are foreigners—300 French and 100 Germans, who are most active in maintaining the tranquillity of the town.

The Congress, when not sitting in secret session, is open to the public at large, and I attended its meetings several times, but with little profit. I know not whether it was owing to my imperfect proficiency in Spanish, but I found the debates excessively dull.

Near the Palace is the Museum, which contains little of interest, except some old Indian curiosities, which are in very bad condition, and badly kept. In the court-yard of this building is a fine equestrian statue of Charles the Fourth, by a native artist, of the name of Tolsa, which originally occupied the centre of the Plaza, but which, at the Revolution, the Republicans having done with kings and queens, consigned to its present dingy resting-place. Among the rubbish, in a corner of the same yard, is also deposited the immense circular sacrificial stone-table of the great temple, on which the Astecs used to sacrifice their human victims: this, from its celebrity and curiosity, is certainly worthy of a better abode. In a street adjoining the palace is another fine building, the Mint, the administration of which is farmed out.

During the latter part of my stay in Mexico, I

lived in the best street in the town, the Calle San Francisco, and had every opportunity of seeing the public on foot, horseback, and in carriages, to the best advantage. Ladies and gentlemen in Mexico dress much the same as in Europe; though among the ladies the graceful mantilla of Spain is, in common use, replaced by a horrid shawl, intensely gaudy, which conceals almost the whole of the face. The mantilla is worn on great occasions, but invariably badly put on, and is a very poor imitation of its sister of Andalusia.

Among the poorer classes, the women have the whole of the upper part of their figures enveloped in the reboso, a sort of scarf made in the country and cleverly put on; and terminate below in the most gaudy dresses that can well be imagined. With all the ladies, however, gentle and simple, the chief charm lies in their hands and feet, which are quite in miniature. Stockings are unknown among all the poorer classes; and when a lady wishes to intimate that she has a friend of consideration, she will tell you "tiene medias"—she has stockings. The hair of all Mexican women is also very beautiful, and, as they are much given to

washing it, half the female population have always their locks hanging to dry, down to their waists, in most luxuriant masses.

The men are wrapped from head to foot, even in the hottest weather, in the everlasting serapé or blanket, having a hole in the middle for the reception of the head. Having peeled a native of this outer skin, you will see him, on a feast-day, dressed in a jacket generally ornamented with silver buttons, a silken sash round his waist, and his nether man inclosed in calzoneros, or what, in England, we should call overalls, opening from the hip to the ankle, and closed, when requisite, with silver buttons. They generally keep three or four of these buttons fastened at top, leaving the rest open all the way down, displaying a plenitude of white drawers. The whole man is surmounted with an immense broad-brimmed conical black hat, plentifully supplied with lace on the rim, if the wearer can afford it, and having, in addition, one or two thick-laced rolls round the root of the crown; the whole so stiffened as to be nearly proof against a sword-cut. The costume is the same throughout the republic of Mexico, except that the ladies of Puebla have a

taste a trifle gaudier than the rest of the Mexicanas, and always prefer a good allowance of scarlet in their "náguas" (petticoats).

Some of the best houses in the city are situated in the Calle San Francisco; and the finest of these is the palace of the late emperor, Yturbide, some of whose family still reside in Mexico. But the College of Mines, or school for instruction in Mining (Mineria), is the finest building in Mexico, and reminded me much of that part of the Louvre facing the Seine; however, its interior arrangements in the various class-rooms, museums, &c., are little in accordance with its outside: it is said to have cost £120,000. This building was much shaken some years ago by an earthquake, which caused a subsidence of the ground at one end of it, so much so that there is at this moment nearly five feet difference in height between the wall at one end of the Patio and that at the other; and yet no crack is visible. My Russian friend and myself ascended the roof, on which stands an observatory. Its great elevation commands a splendid view of the city, with its beautiful surrounding mountains.

Hearing that there was to be a great distribution

of prizes in church, one Sunday, to youths who had distinguished themselves in some school, I went, and was rewarded by the sight of the President Herrera, in full uniform, and all his ministers. The ceremony was not very imposing, consisting chiefly in the reading of essays and performance of music; but still a novelty worth seeing.

I visited, with a friend, two of the Mexican convents, the "San Francisco" and the "Professa." The former of these is the largest in the town, but much dilapidated, and dirty in the extreme; its patio filthy enough to breed a plague. The pictures had been all spoilt, and we were actually driven out by the horrid odours infesting the place. The Professa is very different; it belongs to an order of monks, not Jesuits but very analogous to them, and is said to be the best-conducted, as well as the most aristocratic establishment of the kind in Mexico. A great part of this convent is open to the public, and contains many fine pictures, the whole well kept and scrupulously clean; bearing a great contrast to its brother of San Francisco.

Whilst examining the pictures in this part of the building, one of the monks, an acquaintance of my

friend, happened to pass, and very politely offered to admit us to a private part of the convent, closed to the public. This is called the "casa de ejercicios," into which divers persons go for a period of nine days, to repent and do penance. There being no penitents inhabiting this at the time, we gladly accepted the monk's offer, and spent two or three hours very agreeably in examining the pictures. These are, I believe, the best in Mexico, and are very beautiful. They are mostly by an artist named Cabrera. Two large pictures at the entrance are representations of purgatory, with a thousand or more distinct figures in each. They are wonderful works of art, and my companion told me the impression they always made upon penitents was very great; though they were, in many respects, very ludicrous. I remember one figure, of the Devil carrying off an unfortunate soul in a wheelbarrow!

Secluded as this building was, it did not escape the curiosity of the Americans during their stay in the city, and few of the pictures have escaped mutilation, most of them having the eyes of the figures picked out with bowie-knives. I suppose this was not done so much out of mere wantonness, as from a sort of

religious feeling; at least, the General Green I have mentioned before, seems to say that his men very properly knocked over every cross they met with! After leaving this sanctuary, we proceeded to the private chapel, through the kindness of another gentleman belonging to the establishment, whom we met in the "casa de ejercicios." There are a few beautiful large pictures here, which have escaped mutilation.

Mexico is full of convents and nunneries, though I was unable to gain admission to one of the latter. Friars wearing gowns of all colours are swarming all day in the streets, and the incessant din of bells is very unpleasant. The Host is perpetually perambulating the town, and to a stranger this ceremony is the most disagreeable I know. All persons within sound of the warning bell are expected to kneel, in the mud or otherwise, as the case may be, and remain in that posture until the sound dies away, even if he is two streets off, and does not see the actual procession at all. On my first arrival I took alarm at every bell I heard, and many a water-carrier with his tinkling mule-bell has put me to full flight. Afterwards I learnt to distinguish the true tone, and,

if possible, took refuge in a shop till the cortège had passed. It is dangerous not to comply with the custom of kneeling, as I have heard of knives being used to force people to compliance. I once got handsomely abused myself, for only taking off my hat.

The chief delights and amusements of the Mexicans of the upper class are the theatre and the Paseo or carriage promenade. The latter is thronged every day, between five and six, with carriages and riders; the carriages, many of them, very good, and well-appointed, but drawn mostly by mules, and, except on Sundays and feast-days, rendered ridiculous by the blackguard aspect of the servants. I have actually seen a handsome carriage, containing elegantly-dressed ladies, with a dirty rascal behind wearing a jacket, and with trousers embellished by a vast aperture in the most conspicuous part of them. On the days I have mentioned, however, all the servants come out in livery; but from not knowing how to put it on or keep it clean, their appearance is not greatly improved. The Paseo might, with a little care, be made a pleasant place enough; but to reach it, one has to pass some horridly-odoriferous refuse

heaps; and the drive itself is either drowned in mud or ankle-deep in dust. The watering part is done by convicts, whom I have seen chained together by the half-dozen, sluicing the road with water from buckets, as if it were the deck of a ship.

In addition to the Paseo, there is a pretty Alameda, containing many fine trees and shady walks, and with a large fountain supplied by the aqueduct in its centre; but nobody appears to take the slightest trouble in keeping it in order, and it is generally so full of drunken leperos that ladies never think of walking there.

The theatre is large and very neatly decorated, not so big as either of the Opera houses in London, but as large as any theatre in Paris: the entrance-hall, however, is very dirty and odoriferous. There are no private boxes, as in England, closed up with curtains; but though every box is really private, each circle, from the lowness of the partitions between them, appears as if entirely open. The fronts of the boxes are very low, not higher than the knees, and display the ladies' dresses to the best advantage. Each proprietor furnishes his own box; a circumstance which adds much to the beauty of the house,

the furniture being of varied colour and pattern, and generally very splendid and luxurious. The pit is entirely divided into stalls, and the aspect of the house on benefit or feast-day nights would be very beautiful from the splendid dresses and jewellery of the ladies, were it not for the cloud of blue incense ascending from the pit, where smoking "puros" is allowed to any extent. Each box has attached to it a little room where the ladies retire between the acts to smoke their papelillos. All ladies in Mexico smoke more or less; but the younger part of the community seldom in public. The acting, whilst I was in Mexico, was good, and once a year they generally manage to get an opera-company from Havannah.

The ladies in Mexico have a very curious method of acknowledging the presence of their friends, either in the theatre, paseo, or street, which consists in shaking the fan slightly open for a minute or so, looking at the same time in the direction of the person they wish to acknowledge.

The portales in Mexico, like those of Puebla, are filled with a multitude of dulce, pulque, toy, and other stalls, which, from their attractions, always

occasion a great crowd, and make the corridor nearly impassable. Many of the best shops in the city, which are almost entirely kept by French or Germans, are situated in these portales; and round their windows are always to be seen a crowd of gaping Indians who have come in from the country with provisions, and are quite entranced by the wonders of the capital.

The gentlemen have a club containing newspapers and other periodicals, and billiards; it is also a sort of exchange, a great deal of business being done there in the course of the day. Some of the Mexican billiard-players are firstrate, and I think, if brought over here, would astonish some of the crack English markers. The game played is the Spanish—viz., with wooden pins in the middle of the table. Simple as it seems to knock these down, two good players, by judiciously leaving the balls, will render this a matter of some difficulty.

In its original state, when surrounded by the lake, Mexico had, within itself, no water fit to drink, the lake being brackish. It is still as badly off as in Montezuma's time; and this necessary article is now supplied, as it was then, by aqueducts—some

of them the very same as in the old city. One of these is brought from Chapultepec, a full league from the town. This Chapultepec is the pleasantest spot in the immediate vicinity of the city. There is a fine fort at it, which ought to have made more resistance to the Americans than it did. This place is also famous for some enormous cypresses, by far the largest trees I ever saw. They are the relics of a wood which once covered the spot, and are said to have been of full growth in the time of Montezuma. The largest is upward of forty feet in circumference. They are all covered with a long grey lichen, which makes them appear even older and more venerable than they are.

The road to this place, continued farther, brings you to a pretty little village called Tacubaya, where most of the wealthy families in Mexico have country houses, and where there are some beautiful gardens. It is a favourite resort for Mexican cockneys on holidays; omnibuses, imported from America, running between it and the town. In company with some friends, I often went to Tacubaya before breakfast in the cool of the morning.

From the shortness of my stay in it, I saw little

of the polite society of the capital; but from all that I heard, I should say it was very good. Some of the domestic arrangements are however, curious. One goes, say to pay a morning visit, and in place of finding a bell-rope with a servant at the end of it, discovers that it is necessary to mount the stairs, and explore each room individually, until he either stumbles upon some servant who can give him information, or finds the lady or gentleman whom he came to seek. All Mexicans—ladies especially—have a wonderful aptitude for sitting in their bed-rooms; and it is often necessary for an intimate acquaintance to walk through half the rooms in the house, ladies' bed-rooms and all, before he meets with anybody.

With regard to the poorer classes of the capital, I was luckily thrown little in their way; but all agreed in giving them, generally, a very bad character. Drinking is carried to a great extent; Catalan brandy and a strong spirit called mescal, made from a species of aloe, but not the maguey, being nearly as much in request as pulque itself. There is no regular police in the city, and after dark it is dangerous to go far without pistols. The only

guardians of the night are some watchmen who are armed with a spear and a lanthorn; the latter they put in the middle of the street, and then retire to sleep quietly in some doorway, only waking up now and then to call the hours, and give a peculiar sort of whistle, like a boatswain's. An English gentleman, resident in Mexico, told me that one night returning from a party, he was attacked in the Calle San Francisco by three men, and it was only by producing pistols, which he always carried, that he got safely home.

A few days after I arrived in the capital, the two diligences from Vera Cruz and Puebla were robbed between Rio Frio and Mexico; the passengers losing about fifteen hundred dollars. Many of the passengers in the Vera Cruz diligence had come with us in the steamer, and from one of them I learnt the manner in which highway robbery is here managed. In the present instance, the passengers of the two diligences amounted to eighteen, none of whom had any arms. The robbers were only ten, but all armed; they were on foot by the roadside, and concealed. When the diligences arrived at the ambuscade, these fellows jumped up, and requested the drivers to stop, which they immediately did

according to a standing order to that effect, in consequence of a passenger sitting beside the coachman having been shot some time before. Some of the robbers then came to the coach-doors, requesting the passengers to alight, and easing each of them of his watch, money, &c., as he came down the steps of the carriage. The whole eighteen were then placed in a line, with their faces to the hedge, and threatened with instant punishment if they in any way interfered with the operation of ransacking the luggage. This was then all taken down—portmanteaus cut open with knives, and trunks broken open with hatchets, till everything of value had been extracted. The unlucky passengers were then told to get their things together as they best could, replace them in the diligence, and continue their journey. The drivers looked on during these operations with utter indifference, and many country people passed with mules, but took no notice of what was going on.

Mexican robbers seldom illtreat people unless resistance is offered, and do not often attack any party that is likely to offer any. A fortnight or three weeks before I arrived in Mexico, two dili-

gences were robbed at two o'clock in the afternoon, in the Paseo, and within a stone's throw of two guard-houses; and an Englishman of my acquaintance was once eased of his horse, watch, money, and valuables, in the Alameda, through the agency of the lazo, which is a most effective weapon in experienced hands. Shortly after I left the city a most worthy old gentleman, a member of the congress, was found at five in the evening, in a public hotel, stabbed in his bedroom, and quite dead, with thirty-nine wounds in different parts of his body. A stir was made about this murder, as it happened to a person of importance, but nothing was heard, at the time, of the murderers, and probably never will be, until one of them confesses on his death-bed.—From what I have said of the lower classes, one can form a tolerable idea of their respectability; I will say, however, that they never did me any harm, though as I never went out of any of the main streets at night, I never had much chance of getting into trouble.

I was very sorry that my time did not enable me to stay for the feast of Santa Guadalupe, the patron Saint of Mexico, which was celebrated shortly after

I left. This feast is the great holiday of the year in Mexico, and is attended by all the people of any consideration in the town, headed by the President of the republic and all his ministers. The shrine of the Saint is some four or five miles distant from Mexico, and all the people go there in procession to hear mass, the day being kept as a general holiday throughout the republic. I was told the ceremony was very splendid, and much regretted missing it.

In the neighbourhood of Mexico is also another place I should have much liked to have seen at the proper season; a village called San Augustin, and at which are yearly given a succession of "Fiestas," the chief amusements being cock-fighting and gambling, both on a very extensive scale. The Monté is described as truly wonderful, the principal tables being heaped with enormous masses of ounces, and going gradually down to the clacos or copper coin of the leperos. My friend Jones told me that he once saw, in the time of Santa Annà, that prince of gamblers, 60,000 golden ounces on one Monté table, at which Santa Anna was playing. An ounce or doubloon is worth sixteen dollars, or about £3. 4*s*.

CHAP. IV.

MEXICO TO GUANAXUATO.

DEPARTURE—TULA—ARROYO SARCO—QUERÆTARO—SINGULAR ATTACK OF ROBBERS—COTTON FACTORY—GUANAXUATO—SLEEPING QUARTERS—HOSPITALITY—MEXICAN SAINTS' DAYS—GUANAXUATO A MINING TOWN—PRODUCE OF THE MINES—VISIT TO THE MINES—LA LUZ—SANTA LUCIA—AUCTIONS—RAYAS MINE—DESCENT INTO IT—THE WORKMEN—HACIENDA DE BENEFICIO—PREPARATION OF THE ORE—AMALGAMATION—REDUCTION.

On the 5th of December I left the city of Mexico, to pursue my journey westward. A few evenings before I started, I was agreeably surprised by meeting in the theatre the gentleman whose hospitality we had enjoyed in Vera Cruz, and finding him anxious to go as far as Guanaxuato, for the purpose of seeing the mines, two other gentlemen, one my Russian friend and the other an American, determined on joining the party; Jones preferred remaining some time longer in Mexico, and I did not see him again for a month or two. This time

we all carried fire-arms, and presented a most warlike appearance. One of the secrets of avoiding robbers in Mexico, is always to take your arms with you when you get out of the diligence for breakfast or otherwise, as there are always some fellows on the watch to observe the condition and aspect of the passengers, which being ascertained they gallop off to report the result to their comrades who are stationed on the road in advance.

The diligence was quite full, and nearly all the passengers, except ourselves, were going to the fair of St. Juan de los Lagos, to which I shall come by and bye. We left the valley of Mexico at its north-western extremity, seeing little in the early part of the day worthy of observation. By eleven o'clock we came in sight of a pretty little town called Tula, where we stopped to breakfast. On descending from the diligence, I think we must here have looked very like ladrones, especially our Russian friend, who carried a pistol like a young carbine, under each arm. Owing to the provident forethought of an English gentleman in Mexico, we were well found in wines and spirituous liquors, and they proved very acceptable; creature comforts of that kind being

excessively bad at the diligence halting-places. The road we travelled this day was a shade better than usual, more owing, I believe, to the natural state of the earth's surface than anything else, as our next day's journey presented us with the worst specimen I had yet seen.

About six o'clock in the evening we reached Arroyo Sarco, where we stopped for the night. Between this place and Tula we had passed through some beautiful tracts of country, fine large grass plains, bounded by well-wooded hills, and reminding me much of our own South Downs. There is only one house at Arroyo Sarco: it was built by the enterprizing owner of the diligences, whose property it and the large estates attached to it, are. It is a fine large brick edifice, tastefully planned, and not unlike an English railway station. All the passengers' comforts are well attended to, and I think it the best resting-place in the diligence line, between Vera Cruz and Guadalaxara. It was the only house in the whole republic in which I ever saw a fireplace; and pleasant enough we found the fire in a cold damp evening, such as that we passed here.

We left Arroyo Sarco at four in the morning, and, after a hot and dusty ride over a most wretched road, reached Queretaro at four in the afternoon, stopping to breakfast at St. Juan del Rio, a little town standing in a deep valley, and having one of the worst reputations of any in Mexico.

A remarkable robbery took place, about three years ago, whilst a Scotch gentleman and his family were descending the hill leading into this town, and the account of which I will here give, as I heard it from the gentleman's own mouth. The travelling party consisted of my informant, his wife, her sister, a maid-servant, and two or three children. The only male servant was a lad of fifteen or sixteen, whose duty consisted in driving the mules of their carriage. They had an escort of seven soldiers and plenty of fire-arms in the carriage; the gentleman himself carrying a double-barrelled rifle. Whilst descending this hill, and in full view of the town, the escort, at that time some distance behind, was attacked by nine robbers, and after a short fight, discomfited, leaving on the ground the sergeant in command, badly wounded, the rest taking to flight. The master of the family, finding what was going on

in his rear, left the carriage, giving one pistol to his wife and another to his boy, with strict injunctions not to use them except in case of extremity. The escort being put to flight, the robbers imagined they had it all their own way, and came down upon the carriage at an easy trot. However, a bullet from the rifle of the gallant Scotchman rolled over the leading man, on which the rest, taking to the bushes and the road side, opened a fire with their villanous carbines; but, luckily, hit nobody. The carriage still rapidly descending the hill, and approaching the town, in a short time the second barrel of the rifle gave out its contents, and a second robber fell. The remainder then, seeing both the deadly rifle barrels discharged, made a rush at the carriage, and one rascal had his hand actually on the carriage door, when the boy put his pistol to his breast, and shot him dead. By this time the firing had alarmed the townspeople who were coming up the hill to the rescue, and the robbers, seeing three of their number dead, and that the odds would soon be against them, took to flight; and so ended one of the most gallant little fights I have ever heard of.

This gentleman told me he had been in the habit of living among the Comanches in the Sierra Madre, where one had to "take care of his hair," as the backwoodsmen say; and that, in consequence, he was pretty cool in his operations, knowing, moreover, that when he did shoot at a man, he was most likely to hit him.

Queretaro is a large town of 40,000 inhabitants, and during the war, whilst the Americans were in possession of the city of Mexico, was the head-quarters of the Mexican Government. Owing to the desire of some of my companions to see a large cotton factory belonging to Mr. Rubio, situated at a short distance from the town, we were unable to see much of the latter; and to the factory we went accordingly. It is very large and beautifully situated, employing a great number of hands, and is fitted with all the last European improvements in machinery. The supply of water is, however, somewhat scanty, and to make up for this defect as much as possible, a wheel of immense diameter (50 feet) has been brought from England, and was just fixed in its place as we arrived. This manufactory, I

believe, is one of the largest in the republic; but from bad management, and the immense outlay, has not yet proved by any means a thriving concern. In addition to the manufacture of cotton goods, in one part of the building carpets are woven, but indifferent in quality; and this manufacture, I was told, does not pay at all.

Among the girls at work in one of the rooms, we saw one about fifteeen years of age, of pure Indian blood, of surpassing beauty, with her splendid hair hanging considerably below her waist, and forcibly reminding me of one of the American Cooper's heroines. The damsel was quite aware of her own perfections, and seemed much to enjoy the admiration of us four "Gringos."

On our return to the town, we found it so dark, that nothing could be seen; and, for my part, I regretted our visit to the factory very much; factories being easily seen by scores in England, whilst Queretaros are rather more difficult to find. We dined very badly at the diligence table d'hote, the house being kept by a surly, disagreeable fellow, whose conduct and demeanour one of our party threatened to report to his master in Mexico;

but whether he did so or no I am ignorant. After dinner we went to the theatre, a mere barn, temporarily used whilst a new one was building, and in which we had the pleasure of seeing a fine old Spanish tragedy brutally murdered, so that it became a mere farce.

We left Queretaro, as usual, at four in the morning, passing through a splendidly-cultivated country the whole day. The road was good, at least for Mexican highways, and the valley or plain in which we travelled, the richest in the republic, endless fields of maize lining the road on both sides. This valley is named the Bajio.

A good many large towns marked this day's route: in the first of these, Celaya, we detained the diligence, being now the only passengers, whilst we went to look at some of the churches for which this place is famous. In Mexico they may be considered very fine, but present nothing very striking to a foreigner. We passed, during the day, crowds of people going to and coming from the fair of St. Juan. At Salamanca we breakfasted, and well too, if I remember right. After passing Trapuato, a good large town, where we changed horses, we reached the verge of

the plain, and entered the cañada, or glen among the hills, through which flowed a stream of dirty water coming from the Haciendas de Beneficio, or works in which the extraction of the silver from the ore takes place.

Two stages before we reached Guanaxuato, whilst changing horses, I was much taken by the appearance of a little girl, of some seven years old, in a cottage where we went to procure some water; and I may as well mention, that throughout Mexico, all the young children I saw were very pretty and interesting, the young ladies being much prettier at that age than when they get older.

We drove into the diligence yard in Guanaxuato at about six, and found the town brilliantly illuminated, in honour of Santa Guadalupe, who celebrated her feast the following day. Upon inquiry for quarters at the diligence hotel, we found that, owing to the number of people passing and repassing to and from the fair of St. Juan, the house was almost full, and we had to put up with a six-bedded room, which already contained another occupant. I ought to have mentioned before, that in the whole line of diligence stopping-places, with the exception of

Arroyo Sarco, the traveller may consider himself very lucky if he can get a single or even a double-bedded room. Most rooms have, at the least, four beds, and some as many as six or eight. However, at Guanaxuato we promised to pay for the bed still unoccupied, and by great exertion got our other room-fellow moved elsewhere, so that, at last, we had the room to ourselves.

After dinner we took a walk in the plaza, on one side of which stands the hotel, which was full of people, selling all manner of eatables, and all the houses in the neighbourhood brilliantly illuminated. During the evening we could think of no better amusement than giving an unlimited supply of dulces and such-like matters to the children in the streets; but soon finding that this made us somewhat too conspicuous, and collected rather too large a crowd of juvenile expectants, we thought it best to retire for the night.

The next morning we presented the letters of introduction with which we were furnished. One of our party already knew the gentleman to whom I was consigned, and who is manager of one of the English mining companies established here. The

American went to the master of the mint, also an Englishman; and both gentlemen, with the usual Mexican hospitality, invited us to come to their houses during our stay. We availed ourselves of their kind offers, and remained, three in one house and one in the other during the five days we were in Guanaxuato. Owing to our first day being a Saint's day, and the next Sunday, nothing could be seen of the mines on either.

These Saints' days are a positive nuisance throughout the whole country. I believe they have been somewhat curtailed in number of late; but when one does come, and that is pretty often, good bye to all work. The people do nothing but enjoy themselves and get drunk till the holiday is over. During the whole Semana Santa or passion-week, all business is everywhere suspended, and large establishments, sùch as factories, worked by natives, are obliged to be shut up for the period. During these two days we employed ourselves as well as we could, in seeing all that was worth seeing in the town, as far as externals were concerned. Guanaxuato is a large place of 70,000 inhabitants, entirely inhabited by people who have either a direct

or indirect interest in the silver mines, with which the district abounds. Though high above the sea, it is less elevated than Mexico. One of its peculiarities of construction struck us very agreeably. In all other Mexican towns I have seen, the streets are perfectly flat and straight; in Guanaxuato they are all up and down hill, and pleasantly crooked. This straightness of the streets is very remarkable in the city of Mexico. Stand in what part of the town you will, you can almost invariably see the open country at the end of the street.

Guanaxuato is not a clean town, but very business-like and bustling, having the reputation of being the most thriving place in the republic. The master of the mint informed me that, owing to the increasing yield of the mines, more than ten millions of dollars had been coined there during the previous year, and that he expected that the coinage of the present (1850) would reach fifteen. During one of our two idle days, we paid a visit to the master of a Hacienda de Beneficio, a couple of miles from the town, and whom one of our party previously knew. This was the gentleman whose adventure with the robbers at St. Juan del Rio, I have mentioned

before. He was very kind to us, and though his establishment was not at work, took the trouble of going all over it, and explaining the various processes.

On the third day after our arrival we started by times, to visit the famous mines of La Luz and Santa Lucia. They are situated among the hills, at five leagues distance from Guanaxuato; we consequently rode to them, our entertainers having kindly lent us horses. Throughout the whole road, a mere foot-path like those in Switzerland, we met and passed troops of mules, to the amount of some thousands, I should think, either bringing the rough ore from the mines to the Haciendas, or returning for more. Soon after nine (having started at six) we reached the town of La Luz, a large place, with a population of 30,000, but very poor in appearance, its inhabitants belonging entirely to the mining interest. We were very kindly received by the English manager of the mine of Santa Lucia, and furnished by him with a capital breakfast. This done we went to see the various works going on. Two of my companions descended the shaft; the remaining one and myself, preferring to go the next

day down Rayas, which, as a work of art, is superior to Santa Lucia, this latter being quite a new mine without any extensive underground works and remarkable only for the richness of its ore.

The scene in the Patio of this mine is very striking, about 5,000 people, men, women, and children, being employed in sorting and breaking the ore in all directions. The ore, when broken to a proper size, is sorted into different heaps; and it is strange to see how practised the performers are in this operation, knowing, from merely looking at a piece of rough ore, whether it ought to belong to this or that heap. Every week there is an auction in the Patio, which is conducted in a curious manner; the various bidders going up and each whispering to the auctioneer what he will give for such a heap, and the latter merely calling out the name of the highest bidder and the price. These weekly auctions in Santa Lucia produce immense sums, I forget how much; but the mere wages paid to the workpeople amount to 25,000 dollars (£5,000) a week.

The ore is raised from the mine by means of horses or mules, there not being, I believe, such a thing as a steam-engine in the district. The natives have a

great repugnance to anything new, and the requisite fuel could not be had without immense expense. From Santa Lucia we went to La Luz, which formerly was the richest mine in Mexico, but is now entirely eclipsed by the former; and the quiet deserted Patio of the one bore a great contrast to the bustle and life of the other. The workings of these two mines communicate. We returned to Guanaxuato by the same road which we had come, still passing the torrent of mules with their valuable cargoes.

The next morning, in company with our host, we went to inspect some of the mines in the neighbourhood of Guanaxuato, which were under his immediate jurisdiction. We first went to Rayas, one of the largest and oldest mines in the republic; it is within a short distance of Guanaxuato, but still unapproachable by any wheeled vehicle. The mine has two shafts, at some distance from each other. The first we looked down was at that time occupied with huge bags of hide, by which the water collected at the bottom is raised from the mine. The shaft itself is of prodigous size, thirty-four feet in diameter. The water apparatus is worked by horses or mules, and must be a dreadfully tedious operation, the labour

of five or six animals for ten minutes not sufficing to raise more than perhaps a hundred gallons. I should think these bags did not contain more. We next proceeded to the other shaft, situated on a different hill, and, I dare say, distant from the first one a quarter of a mile.

This time we all intended to descend, and miners' clothes being provided, we prepared ourselves accordingly. This shaft is not so large as its fellow, but big and deep enough (300 yards) to inspire one with a good deal of awe and apprehension, especially as we knew, from seeing the descent, the day before, at Santa Lucia, how such things are managed. We were furnished with some boys as guides, carrying candles, and were then tied, boys and all, on to the rope, like onions, one above the other, and so let down. During the descent the boys commenced singing a chant which sounded very well from the prodigious echo. After we had reached a certain depth, the rope, from its length, began to revolve, and at first we had some difficulty in keeping ourselves from knocking against the sides.

We remained below a considerable time, and walked a great distance. The heat was intolerable,

and ventilation very bad; in fact, when we reached a spot where some fifty men were working, it was more than flesh and blood could stand, and we were glad to make our escape to a cooler place. The workings are very large, but do not display any of that elaborate architectural skill which so struck me in the quicksilver mine of Almaden, in Spain, when I visited it in the spring. The ore of Rayas is, or was at the time of my visit, very poor, and from being one of the richest mines in the republic, it is now become one of the least productive. There are a few spots in the mine where rich ore is met with, but it is in very small quantities.

On my remarking the absence of foreign workmen among the actual miners, I was told that they had been often tried, but never found to answer. Cornishmen or others brought from England, invariably took to drinking, and became so insolent and unmanageable that no reliance could be placed upon them, besides being physically unequal to the work in that climate. Most of the superintendents of mines are English or Americans, and all told me that they would prefer never having any but natives under their orders.

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On our return to daylight, after a good purification we breakfasted with the resident superintendent of the mine, and had a look at the Patio. There were going on exactly the same operations as we had previously seen at Santa Lucia, but with fewer people at work. After this we rode to the Promontorio, a small and poor mine, where we witnessed one of the weekly sales I have mentioned before. The whole lot only fetched 100 dollars.

The country about Guanaxuato is full of mines, but rich as it is underground, it is very barren on the surface; no cultivation at all, and hardly any wood; nothing seeming to flourish but the everlasting cactus and prickly pear.

After returning to Guanaxuato we visited the Hacienda de Beneficio, under the immediate superintendence of our host, and witnessed the whole process, from the bringing in of rough lumps of ore on the mules' backs, to the taking out of bright lumps of silver, ready for the mint. The Hacienda de Beneficio consists of long rows of buildings surrounding a large Patio, paved with stone, and covered with what, to a stranger, appear heaps of

mud, with groups of mules treading it about in all directions. All the power used is supplied by mules.

First, the ore as it comes from the mines is put under large stampers of wood shod with iron, and crushed to the size of a bean. Next, this gravel is put into a circular tub-like reservoir, made of flat slabs, and paved with small rough stones, placed close together, and perpendicularly; in this reservoir are perpetually travelling round and round, two or three large rough blocks of stone. These, with the help of water, grind the ore into a thin mud, quicksilver in small quantities being added to separate the gold, of which all the ore contains a small portion. With the quicksilver it forms an amalgam, which sticks in the crevices of the rough stones at the bottom of the tub. This precious mud is next spread upon the stone floor of the Patio, exposed to the sun, and, after a couple of days or so, is plentifully sprinkled with salt and pounded copper ore. Lastly, quicksilver is added in large quantities, and our mud heap is complete. After remaining exposed to the sun for several days more, the whole being meanwhile plentifully stirred up by mules, to cause the necessary combinations of the ores and salt and

the silver and quicksilver, the mass is taken to the washing tubs, in which work large arms of wood. Here the greater portion of the dirt is washed away, and the heavy amalgam of silver and quicksilver remains at the bottom. The water is then let off from the tubs, and men with spades get out the amalgam, which is subjected to a second washing by hand in large, round wooden bowls. The operators are most skilful in the management of these bowls, and get rid of nearly all the remaining rubbish, retaining the amalgam at the bottom. The amalgam is next put into a quicksilver bath, or large brick vat full of quicksilver, for the purpose of taking up any small portions of silver which remain still unamalgamated. The whole is then filtered through an immense canvass bag, which allows the pure quicksilver to run off, leaving the amalgam behind, which now comes out in a sort of hardish paste of the consistency of mortar nearly dry. This paste is cut into triangular shapes, and put into a sort of furnace, in order to expel the quicksilver. The pieces of amalgam are piled in a circle on a copper-plate, having a hole in its centre, communicating with a vessel of water beneath. Over this pile is then

placed a large iron or copper bell, which is luted to the plate, and then surrounded by burning charcoal. The fire is kept up a sufficient length of time to drive off the quicksilver which condenses and is collected in the water below. After this operation, the pure silver remains, much reduced, of course, in weight, but of the same size as when put under the bell. Nothing now remains but to take it to the mint, and as no pure silver is permitted to be exported from Guanaxuato, this is always immediately done.

I inquired whether all this dabbling in quicksilver had not some noxious effect on the operators or the mules; but was told not.—During the whole of these processes a sharp watch is kept upon the workmen who, as they are all rogues, will steal ore, quicksilver, amalgam, or anything they can lay their hands upon. These Haciendas are like mills in England, seldom having any connection with particular mines, but open to grind anybody's ore for a consideration.

The next day was again a feast-day and nothing doing. An Englishman resident in the town very kindly offered to conduct us to the top of one of the hills overhanging it, and from which we had a

splendid view of part of Guanaxuato. From the conformation of the ground it is impossible to see all the town at once.

To my great joy on returning from this ride, I found that an old friend from the west, on his road to Mexico, had arrived by the diligence; and a pleasant chat over old times occupied the rest of the day. As we were all going to start at four the next morning we took leave of our kind hosts over night, and slept at the diligence hotel,—five in one room. My newly-arrived friend and my three travelling companions, next morning, took their seats in the diligence for Mexico, and I mine, to pursue my solitary route to Guadalaxara.

CHAP. V.

GUANAXUATO TO TEPIC.

LEON—LAGOS—GREAT FAIR OF SAN JUAN—VOLCAN DE COLIMA —RIO GRANDE—GUADALAXARA—DEPARTURE—ESCORT—SOLDIERS' DISCIPLINE—DEFUNCT ROBBERS ILL DRESSED—LACK OF TRAVELLING CONVENIENCES—MOZOS—BARRANCAS—CLIMATES OF MEXICO—A FRENCH FAMILY—LAST DAY'S JOURNEY—MEXICAN HORSES—TEPIC.

ONCE out of the hills which surround Guanaxuato, the country becomes quite flat, fertile, and well cultivated, and with little picturesque beauty. The diligence only contained one other passenger besides myself. We stopped to breakfast at a large and dirty town, called Leon. This place, my companion told me, contained 60,000 inhabitants. I should have guessed it at less; but it is a large town. It is celebrated for its iron manufacture, being the Birmingham of Mexico. The diligence was robbed between Leon and Guanaxuato, two days before I passed. After leaving Leon, we crossed a rocky ridge of hill, upon a wretched road, and about two o'clock in the afternoon reached

Lagos, the sleeping-place,—the dullest little town I ever had the pleasure of spending half a day in. There is nothing to see, and I think I went to bed as soon as it was dark, for want of something to do.

The next morning, at four, found us again in the diligence, and upon the road leading to San Juan de los Lagos. The country was throughout hilly, but uninteresting, and the road execrable. Whilst it was still dark, we passed several encampments of people coming from the fair, and when it became light met vast crowds in motion. This fair is held yearly, and is attended by people from all parts of the republic; it corresponds to one of the great Russian or German fairs, and an immense deal of business is transacted at it. The scene along the road, until we reached St. Juan, was very amusing, every available means of locomotion being made use of, and the costumes of the travellers as various as their means of travelling. Waggons, carriages, carts drawn by bullocks, and carts drawn by horses, men and women, singly and in couples, on horseback, muleback, and donkeyback, by scores, were pouring along the road, whilst the pedestrians were even more numerous still. In the Mexican republic, when

a lady and gentleman ride on the same horse, no extra saddle or pillion is used. The gentleman politely gives up his saddle to the lady, and takes his seat behind on the horse's bare back, clasping her round the waist as she sits sideways, and looking, I think, to what we would call the wrong side of the horse. Before we reached the fair I am sure we must have met and passed from 8000 to 10,000 people.

At eight o'clock in the morning we reached St. Juan, and had some difficulty in making our way through the vast crowd swarming in the streets. The diligence stopped here four hours, and I had plenty of time to look about me. Rather expecting to find a friend here, I went in search of him immediately, but found that he had left for Guadalaxara. St. Juan stands in a deep valley, entirely surrounded by hills, and, save at the fair time, is evidently a place of little importance. The scene it presented at present reminded me strongly of the Epsom Downs on the Derby day. I was told there were no less than 200,000 strangers collected, most of them, during their stay, living in the carriage, waggon, or other vehicle, that had brought them.

Among such a collection, of course, thieves, never scarce articles in Mexico, were pretty plentiful. The friend I met in Guanaxuato, in passing through this place two days before, lost three handkerchiefs in as many hours. A merchant keeping a store here, told me that out of the 200,000 people supposed to be at the fair, about 50,000 had come for commercial purposes and the rest to steal!

Everything in the known world is to be bought or sold at this fair. The merchants keep open shop with small flags having their name and description of the articles sold with appropriate devices such as "muy barato" (very cheap) and others of a like sort, projecting from the doorway. The value of the merchandise sent is enormous. One gentleman in the city of Mexico remarked, on my asking if the fair this year was likely to be good, "I hope so, as I have 300,000 dollars' worth of goods there." Itinerant venders of everything fill up the streets, and the stranger is beset with fifty people at once, all wanting to sell fifty different things. The commonest articles are horses, saddles, bridles, spurs, whips, serapés, rebosos, lazos, swords, pistols, *et id genus omne.* A French restaurateur had established

a capital breakfasting-house in the Plaza, and to him I repaired. Gambling is of course one of the great amusements at the fair; the Monté tables being without number and large sums lost and won.

At twelve o'clock we left St. Juan, the diligence being now full and containing among the passengers an Englishman bound for Mazatlan. By six o'clock we reached our stopping-place, San Miguel. The country is very hilly between St. Juan and this place, but with a good deal of fine turf. San Miguel is a little place, prettily enough situated, but containing nothing of interest. This evening, for the first time since I left the Azores, there fell a little rain, but the shower did not last five minutes.

At the usual hour, I started again for my last day's journey in the diligence. This day's advance was, in point of country, a decided improvement upon the last one,—the greater part of the way being through fine plains, bounded on both sides by abundance of hills. We stopped in the "Tierra Colorada" or red land, so called from the colour of the soil, at a roadside hut for breakfast, which was wretched, and our company was shared by pigs, poultry, dogs, and any other thing or body that

chose to join us. In the early part of the morning we got a glimpse of the snow-covered Volcan de Colima, situated nearly on the Pacific, and at least 150 miles distant from us as the crow flies. We passed through one excessively pretty village, I think Zapotitlan, where there appeared to be great cultivation of oranges, limes, bananas, and other fruits: plenty of which were bought and consumed in the diligence. About ten leagues before we reached Guadalaxara, we passed the Rio Grande or Santiago, which runs into the Pacific at San Blas. We crossed it by a fine stone bridge, the river here being of some considerable size. This, however, is the only river I saw between the two oceans large enough to inquire the name of. We reached Guadalaxara about half-past four, and I found my friend, missed at St. Juan, waiting for me at the diligence office.

I arrived in Guadalaxara on a Saturday night, and now took leave of the diligence, having to pursue my journey on horseback for the rest of the way, about 170 miles. Finding that a gentleman was going to Tepic, the place of my destination, on Monday morning, in a carriage, I agreed to accompany him part of the way, and immediately set

about procuring horses and servants for the journey. During the next day, Sunday, I employed myself in seeing all I could of Guadalaxara. It is a very large, and, apparently, a fine town; but, from nearly all the houses being built of "adobes," towards the close of the rainy season, when the whitewash gets washed off, I was told that the streets present a very wretched appearance. Guadalaxara has a population of from 60,000 to 80,000, and is the second town in Mexico. The Plaza, like those of Puebla and Mexico, has the cathedral and government buildings on one side, and portales on the others. The cathedral is poor, but the portales very extensive, and the shops are good. The Plaza is better kept than any I had seen; and, from some trees growing in it, does not look such a scorching, dried-up place as those I have before mentioned. In the city of Mexico there certainly is a row of trees at one side and in front of the cathedral, but those in Guadalaxara are planted in the middle of the Plaza, and look much better.

I dined with a German gentleman to whom I had a letter of introduction, and afterwards walked in the Paseo, a fine large drive, preferable, I think, to

that of Mexico, and reminding one of the Prado in Madrid. Guadalaxara has many resident families of distinction, and is, therefore, a fashionable place; many good carriages are to be seen in the Paseo, and the usual splendidly-equipped horsemen. This town is very religiously disposed, and full of convents. The nuns are celebrated for the manufacture of dulces and ornaments, such as flower-vases, made of a particular kind of clay, and sweetly scented. They are termed "Jarros." These productions are all sold, but I do not know what becomes of the money that is received for them.

I started at seven the next morning, in company with the gentleman I have before mentioned. We went eleven leagues in a carriage, and I then left him to pursue my way on horseback. Our retinue, with the carriage, was very vast. I don't know how many horses and servants my companion possessed; my own share consisted of two riding horses for my proper person, two servants, each with his own horse, and one mule to carry my baggage. About two leagues from the town we were joined by an escort of fifteen foot soldiers, who were going to meet a valuable cargo of goods coming up from

the coast, and who, for a consideration, gave us the benefit of their company. The first few leagues from Guadalaxara are very flat and uninteresting.

About five or ten leagues from the city we were met by a most wild-looking cavalcade of twenty men on horseback, all clothed in ranchero costume, with leather jackets and calzaneros complete, and carrying lances adorned with flags. I made sure they were the identical robbers we were so afraid of, but they proved to be the servants of my companion, who had come to protect his precious person. They were all fine, wild-looking fellows, and well armed; most of them carrying, in addition to their lances, carbine, sword, and pistol.

In illustration of the discipline of Mexican regulars, let me mention, that this morning, in passing some cottages, a lot of dogs rushed out and barked at us furiously, whereupon one of our foot-escort, without word of command or otherwise, broke his rank, shot the leading dog dead with his firelock, and fell in again, the officer in command not even turning his head to see what the noise meant.

At this time there was somewhere in the neighbourhood a band of eighty robbers, led by a man of

note in his profession; whence our warlike precautions. My German friend in Guadalaxara told me that the week before, these gentlemen had kept the road leading from Zacatecas to the fair of St. Juan, and had eased the fair-goers of 40,000 dollars. We stopped to breakfast at a place called the Venta, of excessively bad reputation, and where there is always a post of soldiers. Here we left the flat plain of Guadalaxara, and plunged into the hills, the country on all sides becoming excessively beautiful.

After breakfast I took leave of my companion, and mounting my horse turned off from the road which he was travelling, into a more direct one for Tepic. After a ride of six leagues more, we stopped at a villanous little place called Amachitan, for the night. Shortly before reaching this, we passed the skeletons of three ladrones, hanging in chains by the road side, who had been executed for a daring robbery committed on this spot two years before, and were here left as a warning to their companions still extant. The nearest village is entirely inhabited by the relations and friends of the suspended defuncts, and these worthy people, as fast as the clothes upon the bones of their kindred are worn

out, replace them with new—one of the most curious instances of consanguineous piety I ever heard of; though it is but fair to add, that they seemed to want a new suit when I saw them.

In travelling, as I was now doing, it is necessary to carry everything with you that you may be likely to want. I did not know this when I left Guadalaxara, and fancied that by bringing my bed I had done all that was necessary. I found out, however, that knives, forks, washhand-basins, &c., were luxuries unknown on the road, and I was at first put to some straits for want of such articles. On arriving at the Meson, or inn, which only professes to furnish food for the animals, you ask for a room, and are shown into a place with four brick or adobe walls, and containing a few boards placed on a frame; this is the bed. Possibly there may be a table, but never any more superfluous furniture. You ask what can be had for dinner, and, if possible, a fowl is caught and killed, if not you must put up with eggs, always procurable, tortillas (maize-cakes), tomatoes, chiles, and frijoles (beans). Therefore let any of my friends who read this, and may be disposed to travel in Mexico, carry with them neces-

sary supplies of everything;—chocolate alone excepted, which is always to be had.

It is but justice, however, to say, that the servants you take with you, or mozos, are the most attentive fellows in the world, and will get you anything that is to be had in the village, even at the sword's point, if necessary. They perform for their master of the time being, all the offices of valet, chambermaid, boots, waiter, and groom, and not unfrequently cook. As a whole, they are most honest and agreeable people, and if one is lucky, as I was, to meet with good mozos, they are invaluable.

Thinking, when I left Guadalaxara, that 170 miles on a Mexican saddle would put me *hors de combat* for some time, I bought an English one, and rode very comfortably the entire journey. The chinches —look that out in the dictionary—annoyed me dreadfully the first night in our beastly Meson, and I was glad when three in the morning found us in the saddle again. We rode on in the dark for sometime, passing, as daylight broke, through a large town called Tequila. The country now became lovely, and continued so all the way to Tepic; the

scenery of this riding-journey being unquestionably the finest, and the mode thereof the most agreeable, of all my previous Mexican travel.

Between Tequila and La Madelena, a village where I stopped to breakfast, I crossed a hill composed of obsidian, which was lying in heaps in all directions, proving the volcanic nature of the district. Of this material Montezuma's Mexicans used to make their sacrificial knives and other cutting instruments. I saw during this day a good deal of cultivation, and the country looked more smiling and happy generally than any I had before seen in Mexico. In the afternoon I passed a fine large Hacienda, called Mochetilti, and by six o'clock in the evening reached the Plan de Barrancas, situated in a deep ravine, whence its name. These ravines or barrancas are found throughout Mexico, and are very curious. Occasionally, on looking on all sides, you see an apparently vast plain stretching away to the horizon; but are surprised, as you proceed, to find yourself at the edge of a tremendous precipice, bounding a large cleft in the earth, often a mile or more wide, filled with enormous trees and even houses.

I believe I have nowhere mentioned, the distinct kinds of climate and soil that obtain in Mexico. They are three: the "Tierra Caliente" or hot country, which, as its name imports, is low and hot, its elevation above the sea never extending above 2000 feet; "Tierra Templada," or temperate country embracing an elevation of from 2000 to 5000 feet above the sea; and the "Tierra Fria," which includes all the high land above 5000 feet. The sudden transition one meets with in passing from the tierra templada to the tierra caliente is often very striking; a thousand feet, more or less, of elevation, shows this very sensibly, as in the present case. At the bottom of the barranca I was descending, I found a totally different climate and productions, the trees being filled with parrots, rarely seen in the tierra templada. Fruits of all kinds flourish better in these hot lands than elsewhere, and the city of Mexico is almost entirely supplied with these productions from the nearest tierra caliente, which lies in the neighbourhood Cuernavaca, eighteen leagues from Mexico. Throughout the republic, however, the true tierra caliente is only found, to any extent, along the coast. On both

its sides by the Gulf and the Pacific, there is a strip of this true hot land adjoining the sea, though it is often wanting on the Pacific side, owing to the mountains which in many parts of the coast come down completely to the shore.

The barranca into which I had now entered was extremely beautiful, and wherever there was room for cultivation among the rocks, there you found it. The trees were magnificent, and filled with parrots and all manner of variegated birds. The Mexicans have it in contemplation to make a bridge across this ravine at its narrowest part. This would be exceedingly useful, as at present all carriage travelling is stopped at either side, and to cross it the carriage must be taken to pieces, and transported by men on mules. However, money is not forthcoming very rapidly for the undertaking, and they want somebody like Robert Stephenson to show them how to set about it.

We had this day done twenty-two leagues, having rested some two hours in the heat of the day, between La Madelena and the Plan. I, of course, felt a little saddle-weary, and slept well, being this night free from visitors. By two o'clock the next

morning we were again in the saddle, and ascending a fine broad paved road, upon the other side of the barranca. The cold at this time was very great, and I found my Scotch plaid, which I told the mozos was an English serape, very acceptable. A heavy dew always falls just at daylight, and the grass and trees become as wet as if after a hard rain.

Just at dawn we passed through the small town of Iztlan, and two leagues more brought us to Aguacatlan, a large place with a good meson, where we remained four hours. These two towns lie in a deep valley with most lovely wooded hills on either side, and the country around is exceedingly well cultivated and populous.

After a good breakfast and sleep, we started again at half-past twelve and jogged on till evening over a fine large plain with plenty of cultivation, passing through several villages. Just as it was getting dark we turned sharp to the right among the hills and pulled up at Santa Isabel, a small place consisting of a few houses, one of which is the meson: we had ridden twenty-two or twenty-three leagues since morning. At the same moment with ourselves, arrived a caravan containing a French family bound

to California, who had come all the way from Mexico, and had occupied six weeks on their journey. They had with them an Irishman acting as charioteer, who could not speak a word of French; and as the rest of the party spoke nothing else, he found, he told me and as I readily believed, the business rather a stupid one. These people had engaged the only room in the meson, and I erected my bed in the private apartment of the landlord, and had the honour of passing the night in the society of that gentleman and his wife, a servant girl, and a lepero sleeping on a bench. I had a good deal of talk with the mother of the French family, who was a well-educated, respectable woman, but cursed with a very drunken husband. They were very ignorant of what lay before them in California, as also of the means by which they were to get there. Tepic, to which they were bound, they imagined was a sea-port, whereas it is fifty miles from the sea, and no road from it by which their waggon could travel. I heard afterwards that they eventually got to Mazatlan and embarked from thence.

I started for my last day's journey at three o'clock the following morning, and a sharp ride of sixteen

leagues brought me into Tepic by ten, and in time for breakfast. Till we reached the valley of Tepic, which is bare of cultivation, the country is most beautiful, and Tepic itself, from a distance looks well, being surrounded by finely-wooded mountains. I found all my friends well, and was heartily glad to get to my journey's end.

Mexican horses are the only ones I have seen fit for travelling such long distances. Their pace is either a paso (amble) or a jog trot very easy. They always continue at the same rate, and never stop. They are very small, but their powers of endurance are wonderful; witness my last ride of some forty-five miles on one horse before breakfast—the last ten, I may add, at a gallop. One of my mozos was riding an old white horse, which had brought him all the way from the city of Mexico; this he had left just fourteen days before, and only stopped by the way one day, at Guadalaxara, where I found him: the distance is over six hundred miles. I inquired of this man how far horses in regular work could go, and he told me twenty leagues a day, as long as they had a leg to stand on. I was so pleased with a mare I had ridden that

I purchased her, on my arrival, for thirty-five dollars. Mexicans never ride mares, and hence the absurdly small price. A good horse costs, on an average, from eighty to a hundred and fifty dollars.

The equipments of the better sort of riders in Mexico are always very splendid and much ornamented with silver. The saddle has a very high pommel ending in a round head for the fixing of the lazo, and generally covered with silver, as is also the cantle at the back. The stirrups are commonly of wood, with leather flaps to protect the feet from the sun and dust; they are fixed so far back in the saddle that, at first, it is very difficult for a stranger to accommodate himself to them. The bridle is covered with plates of silver, and has only a single rein fastened to the most cruel bit I ever saw, having an iron ring encircling the horse's lower jaw. The rider wears enormous spurs, sometimes silver or even silver gilt, but generally iron inlaid with silver. They are very blunt and more for show than for use. The common rancheros wear them of iron, greatly magnified, and with small pieces of the same metal dangling from the rowels to assist in making more music.

The endurance of Mexican horsemen equals that of their horses, and is very astonishing. They will ride almost any distance, and very fast, feeling little fatigue. The English courier from Mexico to Vera Cruz, an old gentleman who has been in that capacity for many years, rides now, and has done ever since appointed, from Vera Cruz to Mexico (three hundred miles), and vice versa, in thirty-six hours, twice a month. Shortly before I reached Tepic, a mozo was despatched from that town with letters of importance to Mexico, and returned with his answer in eight days, the whole distance being little under 1400 miles. All Mexicans wear short jackets on horseback, it being considered, "muy feo," or not the correct thing at all, to appear in a Mexican saddle with a long-tailed coat. An American friend with whom I occasionally rode in Mexico, always appeared in a surtout, and was an object of much amusement to the leperos.

CHAP. VI.

TEPIC.

TOWN OF TEPIC—SITE—HOUSES—BUILDING MATERIALS—CLIMATE AND WEATHER—HEALTH OF THE PEOPLE—NATIVES—MARKETS—FRUITS—WATER—WASHING—PIGS—COCKS—ZOPILOTES—FOOD—SHOPS—TRADES.

I arrived at Tepic on the 18th of December, 1849, and remained there till the beginning of the following June. During this time I had plenty of opportunities of seeing the habits and customs of the inhabitants, their in-door and out-door amusements and occupations; and as my readers may probably like to know what people do in a small, obscure, out-of-the-way town in the Republic of Mexico, I will try and inform them to the best of my recollection.

And, first, let me give a sketch of the town itself. Tepic is situated on a plain, but in the vicinity of mountains. It is about 3000 feet above the sea, from the nearest point of which it is distant about fifty miles. It contains only about 8000 inha-

bitants, but is a large place for its population, the individual houses covering so much ground: that in which I lived during my stay, I dare say covered an acre and a half, with its patio, stable-yard, and corral. The streets are most of them tolerable: I lived in the best in the town, and it was kept reasonably clean. At one end of this street is the Plaza, containing the church, court-house or meeting-place of the ayuntamiento (corporation), and portales. Fine rows of trees surround this Plaza, and it has also an old fountain in the middle. Passing on beyond the church, the ground slopes away to the river, which is of tolerable size, and very useful, as I shall show hereafter. One of the principal streets leads directly from the Plaza to the Paseo, which is a mere common, without any distinct drive for carriages like that of Mexico or Guadalaxara. What drive there is has been merely worn bare by the constant passage of mules and vehicles. An English gentleman, many years a resident of the town, some time ago offered to improve and lay out this Paseo for the benefit of all, but his offer was declined.

Tepic is situated nearly on a flat, with the excep-

tion of those streets sloping up to the Llano and down to the river. On the north-west side of the Paseo is one of those curious barrancas I have mentioned before; it is very deep but narrow and crossed by a bridge, and is so little apparent that, till within twenty yards of it, a stranger would not know that such a place existed. On the west side of the Paseo lies the Alameda, a pretty garden, but badly kept, and with the railings and gates sadly in want of repair. Beyond this, again, and just outside the town is a beautifully turfed down called the Llano (the generic name for all similar plains), the pleasantest drive in the neighbourhood, and much used for horse-racing. The llano is of considerable size, it having taken me five minutes, on a thorough-bred horse at full speed, to get round it. The ground to the westward rises from this, until you reach the foot of a beautifully-wooded mountain called San Juan, of which more anon.

On the eastern side of the town, and at a distance from it of a mile or mile and a half, lies an immense laguna or marshy lake, swarming with wild ducks and other aquatic birds. This laguna is thought to have once been the crater of a volcano, being entirely

surrounded by hills, with only a very small opening among them at its western extremity. From its nature, this place is very unhealthy, and many projects have been started for draining it; but nothing has yet been done. On the north and north-west is another long range of hills, between which and San Juan a small natural opening is made available for the roads to San Blas and Mazatlan. On the south and south-east extends the valley that I had traversed in coming from Guadalaxara, filled up, at its extremity, by a singular-looking mountain, called San Guenguey (or some such name), having an immense isolated rock in the centre of its concave top. Some four miles from the town, the river, in this direction, is crossed by a fine bridge which has lately been erected at a good deal of expense.

The houses in Tepic are nearly all built of *adobes*, a few only of brick, though these two materials are often mixed in the same building,—a method of making houses I cannot fancy at all a good one. These adobe-built houses have one great advantage over their brick brethren, viz. that if you wish to build a new house on the same site as the old one, you

need only knock down your old house, and mash up all the adobes again with a liberal supply of water, till a good stiff mud is formed; this cut into squares and dried in the sun, again becomes new adobes. In the manufacture of these houses no mortar is used, the kindred mud from which the adobe is made being used to fill up interstices. The walls of such houses are generally amazingly thick, occasioning a great loss of space in the interior.

The houses are mostly one-storied, though some have two stories, and some a sort of half story, or extra house built upon the top of the corridors of the lower one. Such was the house in which I lived; the doors of all the rooms on the first floor opening into the open air upon the top of the corridor. Almost invariably all the rooms on the same floor have doors leading from one into the other, so as to form a continuous suite. There are no buildings of either importance or beauty in Tepic; but many of the private houses are good. There is only one church in the town, and that is a poor affair; but there are, besides, one or two chapels belonging to old convents. Only one of these convents, La Cruz, is still inhabited by monks. It is

situated outside the town, upon one corner of the llano, and is a place of great resort on Sundays and feast days.

The houses of the poorer classes, at all the outskirts, are wretched in the extreme, worse than the worst huts one sees in Ireland and the highlands of Scotland. These houses, when not built of adobes, are made of cane or sticks, and the interstices plastered with mud; they are thatched with long grass. In the tierra caliente the mud is often omitted, the canes being placed closer together.

As I was only in Tepic during the dry season, I cannot speak of its climate generally; but even in this its best time, my report is not very favourable. Nearly all the time I was there we were much annoyed by a nasty thick, damp fog, that, after sunset, nearly every night, came rolling up from the tierra caliente, through the gap between St. Juan and his neighbour, and spreading itself out over the whole valley. This fog was often joined by another that came from the laguna; and, together, they made the evenings excessively damp and unpleasant. As the spring and summer advanced, however, this nuisance abated. Extreme cold is

very rare in Tepic; nevertheless, whilst I was there we had five nights of frost, with the thermometer as low as 30° Fahr., and which sufficed to kill the leaves of all the bananas and other tropical trees in the neighbouring gardens. But even in our winter, we had to complain much more of heat than cold. This, during the whole of my stay at Tepic, was great, but increased considerably during the end of the spring and beginning of summer. The last three weeks, I think the thermometer hanging in our corridor, and always in the shade, was never less than 85° at noon. During this time the day and night temperature was more equable; but from my own experience I can say, that the great difference of temperature between night and day is very trying. In the month of March, when the thermometer at noon had been 80°, I have seen it down at 41° at four in the morning, when I was going duck-shooting. This great coldness of the nights must, I think, tell on the health of that portion of the population who, so to speak, never go to bed, but stretch themselves on the floor in their serapes, on a mat, or even without one. In our own house nearly all the servants used to sleep in the open

corridors, with nothing but a mat between them and the bricks, and no covering but the serape.

During the whole of my stay in Tepic, rain only fell twice. One day in March we had twenty-four hours of gentle rain, and on the eve of Good Friday it poured for eleven hours, our rain-gauge giving three and a half inches as the quantity that had fallen. The same evening we witnessed a magnificent lunar rainbow, beautifully defined, and quite as large as a solar one, but destitute of the prismatic colours. In the rainy season, which commenced shortly after I left, the quantity of rain that falls, and in a short time, is prodigious. A curious proof of this is afforded by a practice which, I was told, is in common use in the town. When any accumulation of earth or other rubbish has taken place, as in the case of excavation for a new house, &c., the whole of the waste earth is placed in heaps in the centre of one of the streets, trusting to the first heavy shower for getting rid of it, by sweeping it into the river.

Partly, no doubt, owing to the great variability of the temperature, and the effect of its own laguna, Tepic is by no means a healthy place. Its inhabit-

ants seldom attain a great age, a man of sixty being looked upon as a wonder. During the rainy season it is very subject to low fever and ague, which they call *calentura*. I myself was never free from cold or sore throat during the whole of my stay. My friends, to be sure, used to attribute this to my going out with my gun in the blazing heat of the day; and this may have been the case, though I think not. But, at any rate, it was better to do this, and catch cold, than stay at home in a strange land, see nothing, and die of *ennui*. Mexicans have no idea of walking in the sun; and I believe half the population thought me mad when I started off in the morning, with my gun on my shoulder. But let them but once try it, and they would not find it so disagreeable. Their notion of heat is always formed within the close streets of a whitewashed town; whereas, in the country, there is always a delightful breeze, often very strong, and quite sufficient to keep one perfectly cool and comfortable. In fact, on the top of San Juan, whilst resting, Castillon, my cazador, and myself often agreed that it was too cold for sitting still, and so we would get up and walk.

The bulk of the inhabitants of Tepic are a cross between the Spaniard and Indian, though there is more of the latter then the former in their compositions. They are very dark, both men and women, and of moderate stature. The costume of the common working people is nothing but a pair of loose wide drawers, and a shirt made of coarse cotton, called manta, and the universal serape. All wear sandals. The other sex have a little more clothing, but not very much. The women have all beautiful hair, and seem to take great pains in washing and cultivating it, as you may see them all day in the river by scores, with their heads a mass of soap; yet they are really hard-working, and far more industrious than the men, who, unless you watch them closely, will never do more work than they can help. The better classes have more of the Spaniard than the Indian in them, and are consequently fairer-skinned: all, however, are dark, and I think I never saw a damsel with blue eyes and light hair in Mexico.

The lower orders of Mexicans are excessively polite, and it is amusing enough to a stranger to see two apple-women meet in the plaza and pass

as many compliments from one to the other as if they were two old Spanish grandees. They are much afflicted with parasitic animals, and at every door in the town were daily to be seen women hunting the heads of their thriving little progeny. Children in Mexico until the age of four or five go as nature made them, and have a greater aptitude for running to stomach than even the fattest little pigs.

Every Sunday in Tepic there is a good market, and people come in, on a Saturday night, bringing fruits, vegetables, and other saleable matters from all the country round. There is, besides, a lesser market always going on, where large quantities of grain and beans (frijoles) are daily disposed of. The supply of vegetables is large, and very varied in quality. I don't know one-half of the names given them. The most common, however, are the sweet potato, zapote, and various kinds of pumpkins. Still, I do not consider Tepic a good place for fruit. There certainly is plenty of all the common kinds, but few of those I liked. The best fruits in Mexico, I think, are the following:—the pine, which one gets in the tierra caliente in great perfection; the

chirimoya, a pulpy, juicy fruit, with black seeds imbedded in its white flesh; ciruelas, something between a plum and a cherry, with a stone in the centre; and petayas, a species of prickly pear. Oranges are very plentiful and delicious. The sandia or water melon is also a very pleasant fruit, with little flavour, but cool, and very refreshing. The true melon is also in great perfection. Bananas, limes, quinces, cocoanuts, citrons, and pumpkins of every species are to be met with out of number. I must not forget to mention, among the better fruits, the granadita or water lemon, the fruit of the passion-flower, filled with seeds like a gooseberry, and having a very aromatic flavour. But, on the whole, I think that the fruits of tropical countries, at least those of Mexico, are too luscious and insipid to please a European.

The anxiety to get a good place in the Plaza for the Sunday's market is generally so great, that men and women all take up a position over night, roll themselves in their serapes and rebosos, and sleep as soundly as if at home.

Tepic is well supplied with water by the assistance of mules and water-carriers; but without these the

supply of this article, really good, would be very deficient. One or two aqueducts, coming from the neighbourhood of San Juan, bring water to the town, which is afterwards conveyed by pipes into the different patios that are supplied with fountains. This water often, from want of attention to the aqueduct, is so bad and dirty, that it is not fit even for washing, and is never used for drinking. In the neighbourhood of the river are several beautiful pozos or wells, the water of which is delicious, and from which a constant supply is brought to the town by carriers at all hours of the day. These pozos are much used by laundresses and bathers, there being usually large holes to collect the water dug just below the springs. One of these I used to pass nearly every evening, and I never remember doing so without seeing two or three damsels sitting in it, rather in undress, washing their hair.

Tepic, on the whole, is a tolerably clean town, thanks to the pigs and zopilotes. The inhabitants I cannot say so much for, though they have no right to be dirty, being always in the water, especially the women. They are very attentive to washing their clothes, and it is very amusing to see a man or

woman wrapped in a serape, or a reboso, sitting patiently by the river side, whilst their apparel is drying on a bush in the sun. The truth is, that however much they wash their under garments, the two articles I have last mentioned never see cold water, and as they are worn as long as they will hold together, and used for sleeping in as well, we have no difficulty in accounting for the dirt one sees amongst the poorer classes. A bathing-house, made of wattles, and thatched, is situated at the river side, where the stream is tolerably deep. This is divided into different compartments, and much used by the better class of inhabitants.

Pigs and dogs swarm in Tepic as elsewhere; and these animals are kept in countenance by fighting cocks, of which almost every house has one tied by the leg to the door sill. At night the the uproar all these animals make is dreadful. One cock begins to crow and all the town joins in chorus; one dog begins to bark and all follow. English cocks I always imagined crow at reasonable hours of the morning, but their Mexican brethren rather incline to keep you awake during the night. Like everything else, however, one soon gets used to it,

and in a week's time I slept as soundly at Tepic as I should have done in London.

The zopilotes or Turkey buzzards are to be seen, from morning to night, in hundreds, little black specks soaring at an immense height in the clear blue sky, and occasionally collecting over one spot, wheeling round and round, and lowering by degrees. This is a clear indication that something promising a meal is underneath. One of our horses required bleeding whilst I was in Tepic, and in half an hour the sight of the blood in the corral had collected hundreds of zopilotes on all the neighbouring walls and houses. The same attraction was supplied by skins spread to dry on a housetop. One day, when out with my gun, I killed a duck at a great distance, and before I could get to the spot where he was lying, a zopilote was wheeling about within a few yards, and seemed almost inclined to dispute my right to my game. I must not take leave of these birds without saying a word about their king, as he is called in Mexico. He is a much handsomer bird than themselves, and always alone. When this king appears, which he seldom does, being a rather rare bird, all the common zopilotes leave any

animal they may be engaged upon, and, retiring to a respectful distance, remain passive spectators until the king vulture has eaten his fill; and, on his taking his departure, they all return to their food.

CHAP VII.

TEPIC.

COTTON FACTORY — HANDS — MACHINERY — PRODUCE — AMERICAN WORKMEN—THE GARDEN—ITS VARIOUS PRODUCE—TORTOISES—FOOD OF THE NATIVES—SHOPS—SOCIETY—ANNUAL FAIR—EDUCATION—RELIGION—LAW AND JUSTICE.

WITHIN a mile of Tepic, at the river side, stands a cotton manufactory called Jauxa, built and owned by the English mercantile house established in Tepic. This manufactory is not very large—not half the size of that I saw at Queretaro. It is, however, admirably managed, and is entirely under the superintendence of American workmen who are eight or ten in number and have the sole charge of the different departments. The number of natives employed in it is about two hundred, and they work day and night, in two gangs. The goods manufactured are only of one kind, viz. a very coarse cotton cloth called manta, of which as I have before said, all the poorer classes in that part of Mexico make their clothes.

The machinery employed is all American. The power used is water, which is furnished by a lead from the river, taken off some distance above the maquina, and of which the supply is always good. In addition to the manufactory there is a series of work-shops, including smiths', carpenters', machinists', and a foundry. In such a country as Mexico all these are necessary for the carrying on of the business, and admirably managed they all are. All repairs connected with the machinery are done in the building, and even new cog-wheels, and simpler pieces, cast in the foundry. The advantage of such an establishment to the town is very great. Independently of the number of natives employed, the machinists when not engaged about the business of the maquina, are beset with applicants for assistance: one fellow wanting his watch mended; another has broken the lock of one of his pistols; a third requires his pianoforte put in order; a fourth needs new springs to his carriage. All these different accomplishments are possessed by one or other of my American friends, and by no other people in the town; and they in general do whatever is required gratuitously.

This manufactory has been at work more than ten years, and from its simple inexpensive style, and good management, has been a very profitable concern—more so than any other in Mexico. The building is brick whitewashed, in a quadrangular form, and one side abutting on the river. The rooms are large, and well ventilated, lighted at night by lamps of cocoa-nut oil: large vats of this are kept in the out-buildings, and notwithstanding the heat of the climate, constantly require a pan of lighted charcoal floating about to keep them from freezing. There is a steam-boiler attached to the factory, used for heating large metal cylinders for drying the thread after its immersion in size, and before being woven. I forget the number of looms always at work, but I should think nearly a hundred. I know the quantity of stuff made in the mill is immense. Every Saturday night the wages are paid, and everything connected with this operation is conducted as regularly as in England or the United States. The Americans, and deservedly too, get high wages, many of them five dollars or £1. per day. They are all engaged by contract, and are found houses adjoining the manufactory.

During my journey I encountered a great many of our transatlantic brethren from first to last, but with none of them could I get on so well, or feel so much at home, as with the higher orders of American mechanics. As far as I have seen, they are, without exception, very clever in their particular branches, very well educated, and much superior, I think, to men of the same class in England. They have none of that disagreeable, self-sufficient importance which I have found to pervade the upper classes of their countrymen. Many a pleasant hour have I spent in company with the resident superintendent of the Tepic maquina, and I would not wish to have a better companion on a sporting or other excursion.

During the whole of the war, this manufactory was never stopped for a single day, the Americans and natives working as well together as if no strife was going on between their respective countries.

In proceeding from the town, at about a quarter of a mile or so from the mill, you get upon a good road—the best, I take it, in the republic—and no wonder, seeing it was made and is owned by Englishmen. The maquina itself occupies an angle

formed by the river, which is here very pretty, and turbulent like a Scotch trout-stream.

One half of the angle is filled up by the maquina and its buildings, the other by a splendid garden extending down to the river from which it is separated by a low wall. This I shall describe somewhat at length, as I wish to show to what perfection a garden can be brought even in Mexico, when owned and managed by Englishmen. I do not believe that there is one equal to it in all the republic. The grounds are, perhaps, four acres in extent, and full of all the fruits, vegetables, and flowers that can be obtained. One main walk runs from the gate to the river-wall, and is lined with bananas on both sides; and under them is a hedge of coffee bushes, with their beautiful white flowers. The coffee grown in this garden is in constant use, and much approved.

On the left of the central walk is a branch avenue of orange trees, almost always covered with flowers, and green and ripe fruit. These oranges are delicious—some of the best I ever met with. Seats are disposed along this avenue, which is the pleasantest lounge in the neighbourhood. The trees are so thick

that no sun can penetrate, and they are always filled with an infinity of birds. A walk extends along the river-wall, and also goes round the garden, and is lined by some noble trees. One path is hedged by pomegranates, which are most beautiful when in full flower.

European vegetables here flourish well, with the exception of potatoes, and we had always a capital supply from this garden. Peas are never out of season, and appear on the table every day in the year. Vines do not thrive, nor do peaches ever come to much; still both are in the garden, and they do the best they can with them. Strawberries were being planted just before I left, and I hope ere this they have produced a good crop. Apples, citrons, melons, pines, and other fruits all do well. In one corner of the garden were some magnificent aloes, one of which was on the point of flowering when I left. Its stem had shot up to the height of some forty feet, and was nearly as thick as my body. I counted thirty-nine branches from which flowers were to be produced, and several blossoms would appear on each branch.

One part of the garden, perhaps a quarter of an

acre, was planted with Guinea grass, and formed a playground for some enormous tortoises, which are natives of San Blas and its neighbourhood. There were six of these fellows, of all sizes, the largest as big as the one I have seen in the Zoological gardens, and able to walk, with great ease, carrying at once myself (10 st. 11 lbs.) and a 12-stone man on his back. They lived entirely upon the guinea grass, and appeared very happy and contented. A stream of water supplying the garden ran through their playground, and a large hole was scooped out for them, in the mud of which they half-buried themselves the entire day. When the big one was wanted for inspection, it took all the gardeners in the place, with crowbars, to rouse him out.

Tepic like the rest of Mexico is badly supplied with good animal food; beef being almost the only eatable meat sold; mutton is a rarity and not good; pork is very seldom eaten as I have mentioned before, pigs being kept almost entirely for lard. Fish there is none, except a kind of catfish, very small, caught in the river, and hardly eatable. Sometimes, but very rarely, a sea fish finds its way up from San Blas, but in such a hot cli-

mate does not often arrive in a state of great perfection. Poultry and eggs are unlimited in number, though few good eggs are placed upon the table; why they should be bad when they are in such abundance I don't know; but they are very seldom quite fresh. Bread is good, but differs much from what we get in England, and is very inferior to the same article in Spain; it is always made in the form of rolls.

The poorer classes live almost entirely upon tortillas, a kind of cake made of maize, and exactly resembling the barley scones of Scotland. Frijoles are also in constant use, and, indeed, without them, no meal in a Mexican house is ever thought complete. When meat is used, it is generally hung beef, dried in the sun. All Mexican dishes are strongly flavoured with garlic, and plentifully strewed with chiles and tomatoes. I myself do not at all dislike Mexican cookery. I think it far better than that in Spain, where everything is swimming in a sea of rancid oil. Pulque, as I mentioned before, is the common drink of all Mexicans, and in Tepic they make good use of it, as well as of the mescal. I have seen, I think, more

drunken people, on a market or fair day in Tepic, than one would see, on a like occasion, in a similar sized town in England; even women are much given to drinking, and are frequently to be met with, very drunk in the streets.

The shops in Tepic are very tolerable, and contain everything that is in common use among the inhabitants; most of them combine the vending of various matters. The only deficiency I ever experienced was in good powder and shot; shooting as a sport being so little in vogue that the articles were not often required, and those who did ask for them seldom knew the difference between good powder and bad. The honest man, my shooting attendant Castillon, who was by trade a sportsman, told me he always made his own shot, by dropping lead into cold water; and curious-looking stuff it was. All Mexican dealers, Tepiqueños included, are not overburthened with modesty in their demands: you are generally safe in giving one half of what is asked.

Ordinary trades flourish pretty well, tailoring, bootmaking, &c., being all tolerable. *Good* carpenters, watchmakers, and other artizans for the finer

branches of trade, are, however, not to be met with.

The society in Tepic is very indifferent, being made up of only two foreign and one or two native mercantile establishments, a few custom-house officials with their families, and shopkeepers resident in the town. From the small number of respectable people, all are upon an equality; and it is at first rather puzzling to an European to buy a pair of gloves of a man in the morning, at his shop in the portales, and in the afternoon to find himself sitting next him at dinner. These small matters, however, one soon gets accustomed to; and those who are to live permanently in such a country as Mexico, must throw such minor prejudices overboard altogether.

Whilst I was in Tepic the annual fair took place, which lasted a week or more. This was conducted much like fairs in England. Booths of all sorts were erected in the Plaza, chiefly for gambling and drinking, little actual business being done. In the centre of these booths two immense roundabouts were established, and during the evening all the people in the town took the air in these whirligigs.

Even the respectable members of the ayuntamiento, with their wives and daughters, seated themselves in a revolving box, and journeyed on for half an hour, without moving a muscle of their faces, or showing in any way that they enjoyed it. The great fun of the fair, however, were the lotteries, which contained everything of household or domestic use, and were always crowded during the evening with anxious players. The dancing booths had their share of the entertainment, and the tinkle of guitars and rattle of boards were heard all over the Plaza. The fandango, the only measure danced by the common people, is a pas de deux, performed by a lady and gentleman standing opposite each other, without any very regular style of step, and varied much at the pleasure of the dancers; the lady occasionally dancing round the gentleman, and vice versa. The performance generally takes place upon some four feet square of boards, laid upon the ground, and is continued till one or the other gives in.

The influx of thieves during this fair was known to be great, and as there was a great deal of money in my friends' warehouses, we all prepared ourselves

in case of attack: the servants for many nights sleeping with loaded muskets and bayonets fixed beside them. Once before, an attack was threatened, and was only averted by showing a determined front, though the assailants mustered some 5000, and were led by a man whom, once before, my host had saved from being shot;—a pretty specimen of Mexican gratitude.

Education, I fancy, is on a rather limited scale at Tepic, as I never saw or heard of more than one school in the town, and the master of that, whenever he got a chance, was always playing billiards. However, I was much astonished to find that an honest simple fellow, who often went out shooting with me, always carried a sort of political squib in his hat (he had no pockets), written in verse, and which he invariably took out to read, whenever I called a halt.

Religion in Tepic is much thought of, and the attendance at mass on Sundays is very good. On the day of Corpus Christi we had a grand procession, the Host being carried entirely round the Plaza, accompanied by all the priests in the neighbourhood, the Ayuntamiento, and all people in

authority. The shops and houses in the Plaza were all hung with silk and particoloured stuffs; crucifixes and images being plentifully dispersed along the line of the procession. Wherever it became necessary to leave the shade of the portales, awnings were spread over the streets, and the roads kept constantly watered. A grand display of fireworks took place in the Plaza, and gunpowder was most lavishly expended. All the natives of course knelt while the procession was passing; we heretics, who were sitting in chairs under one of the portales, saved our dignity and consciences by turning the backs of the chairs outwards, and tilting them up with one knee on the seat. I witnessed a similar procession at Cadiz on that day year, and the contrast between the two was very great. The Cadiz one was most splendid, and displayed all the wealth of the different churches, and the magnificence of the ladies' jewellery; the streets being entirely lined with soldiery; whereas in Tepic, hardly a score of well-dressed people were to be seen, and the crowd of ragged leperos contrasted greatly with the richly-dressed natives of Andalusia.

Apropos of the fireworks mentioned above, I

may here remark, that over all Mexico the people are very fond of fireworks, and the simplest fandango or most gorgeous procession is alike ushered in by a flight of rockets.

The learned professions are not very flourishing in Tepic. There are some half dozen doctors, but some of them I fancy are not very learned in their art. I only had occasion during my stay to employ one, and I certainly found him as kind and attentive as could be desired.

There are few lawyers, and I saw nothing at all of them, though the administration of justice in the whole republic is at a very low ebb. Cut a man's throat or shoot him, if you prefer it, in sight of fifty people, and if you can pay the judge what he considers enough of dollars to outweigh their testimony, you are sure to be acquitted.

Before I left Tepic my attention was one day drawn to a ruffianly-looking fellow, holding his horse at the door of a house, and who, I was credibly informed, was known to have committed, it was said, twenty-five murders—at all events more than one. He had for some time been the leader of a band of robbers on the Guadalaxara road, and,

whilst exercising his vocation in that quarter, had most wantonly cut the throats of a lawyer of that town, of his wife, and two or three children. The poor man was only going to spend his Sunday in the country, and had purposely left his purse at home; owing to which oversight he and his family were all killed by this villain out of mere spite. By pursuing this vocation some time the ruffian acquired a good deal of money, and retiring from public life, established himself as an honest soapboiler, in the neighbourhood of Guadalaxara. An unlucky creditor called one day, whilst my friend was making soap, and requesting the settlement of his small account, was incontinently pitched into the boiler, and went the way of the "poor workhouse boy." For one, if not both of these murders, this villain was tried, and the crime clearly proved, but he showed the trying judges cogent reasons why he was not in a fit state to be shot, and he escaped accordingly. When I saw him with some others, nearly as bad as himself, he was about to proceed to California, where I hope he has been lynched long ago. If he has not it is not my fault, as I gave his name and described his appearance and cha-

racter to some worthy Yankees I subsequently met in an American steamer, and they promised to bear him in mind on their return to California.

Justice, however, once in a way, does overtake some of them. I myself saw one man shot who had committed seven murders, and had been tried before; but then he was rich. Alas, in an evil hour when poor, he chopped up with his axe a passenger who wished to cross the Rio Santiago where he was ferryman. His comrade assisted at the murder, and afterwards turned Queen's, or I presume they would call it in Mexico, President's evidence; and the ferryman having no ready cash by him, was convicted. The culprit having passed the two previous days and nights in what is called capilla ardiente, having a priest always with him, was brought down to the common by the river, and a square being formed of mounted national guards, he was fastened in a sitting position to a cross placed against an adobe wall, and shot by a party of national guards. They fired within ten paces, and the man died at the first discharge, though they kept on firing as long as the least motion was perceptible. Comparatively very few

people were present at this spectacle, and I saw one carriage containing ladies, which I thought would have been better away. Probably the lady reader may think, I should have staid away too. If it is any consolation to her, I arrived late and did not see the unfortunate man until unbound from the cross quite dead.

CHAP. VIII.

TEPIC.

OCCUPATION AND AMUSEMENTS — THEATRE — CARNIVAL — BULL-FIGHTS — COLEARING — HORSE-RACING — WILD INDIANS — MANUFACTURES OF THE DISTRICT — COTTON FACTORY — SUGAR HACIENDA — AGRICULTURE — CATTLE.

THE inhabitants of Tepic are nearly all day engaged in their various occupations, which always seemed to me to consist mostly, in the hot part of it, of sleep, all window-shutters being carefully closed. As the day advances towards the afternoon, people begin to appear in the streets, and in the evening all the population is out of doors. The Paseo is filled with what carriages there are in the town, and and those who have none walk in the Alameda; or the ladies, if indisposed to walk, bring their chairs on to the pavement in front of their houses, and sit there, or in the windows, till it is dark. We always drove to the Maquina, and spent the pleasant cool time, between six and seven o'clock, in its delicious

garden. At seven comes the *oracion,* when the church-bell rings for a minute or two, during which all the population take off their hats and say a short prayer, as they do also at twelve o'clock. The evening is occupied, when there is no theatre open, by a tertulia, i. e. an assembly of ladies in one or other of the houses, where they sit for hours together, generally disposed in a circle, and do nothing but talk. I am told Mexican ladies are very industrious, and all make their own clothes; how they conduct themselves in their penetralia I don't know, but through the windows, always open, I never saw them occupied with crochet, netting, or any other of those pleasing nothings that always keep English ladies' fingers employed, without shutting their mouths. The gentlemen always passed their evening at cards or in the billiard-room, and as far as I saw, there seems little domestic intercourse between the sexes. Of course, in the house where I lived things were conducted in a more English and more pleasant style.

During a great part of my stay the theatre was open; part of the time with a regular company, and part with equestrian performances. This theatre

is very tolerable for so small a place as Tepic, but badly lighted. The performance on the whole were very fair, and the house was always crowded on Sundays and holidays. Smoking goes on everywhere, from the dress-circle to the gallery.

During Easter week, the carnival took place, and a precious stupid affair it was; the sole amusement of the men being to carry about pocketfuls of flour to rub the faces of every young lady they met, the young ladies rubbing the gentlemen in return. I had nothing to do with this amusement, and as no room is sacred from the intrusion of people bent upon this sport, I hung out liberal promises of a good supply of cold water to any one who molested me.

On Sundays and feast days we generally had a bull-fight; and as, probably, most of my readers, though they have often heard of, have never seen, one of these exciting spectacles, I will describe it somewhat at length. The Mexican bull-fight is very different from the Spanish, less cruel, but at the same time does not produce the same feeling of excitement in the spectator. In Spain, and above all in lovely Andalusia, these spectacles are in perfection, being conducted according to the best principles of the

mystery of "Toromachia," which is there considered a science. The Plaza de Toros is a large circular building, capable of holding an immense number of spectators, raised in tiers one above the other. The lowest row is separated from the arena by a strong barricade of stout planks, with several projections every here and there, used as retreats for the discomfited chulillos and picadors.

The performance commences by all the actors in the scene making an obeisance to the alcalde or mayor, who sits in his official box. This done, the picadors on horseback, and in Spain prodigiously padded, having their horses blindfolded, and armed with lances having points very short and graduated according to the season of the year and temper of the bulls, take up their positions on the left of the door from which the bull is to issue. The matador and his assistant chulillos, gaily dressed, in Andalusia and Spain generally most splendidly so, scatter themselves over the plaza, with their capas or cloaks of various bright colours—red being the most prominent. The door is then opened, and the bull appears. If he is a good bull, he attacks directly the picador on his immediate left, who, if able, keeps

him off at his lance's point. If the bull gets the mastery, down go horse and man, the former, in Spain often killed, and always wounded; if the man, the bull passes on to attack the next picador. The horses used are always wretched, those in Spain even worse than the Mexican. In the latter country the bulls are very small and young, such as in Spain would be considered novillos or calves; they have, moreover, the tips of their horns sawn off, and, consequently, little damage is ever done to the horse. In Spain it is very different; I have seen one bull kill all three horses of the three picadors awaiting him, in as many minutes, and each by a single stab in the chest. Spanish bulls are never fought until seven or eight years old, when they are of prodigious size and power. The bull I allude to above killed thirteen horses before his career was over, when he was respited from death by the unanimous voice of the Plaza.

On a bull-fight day all ranks are on an equality, and the whole place resounds with the roar of the spectators. I have heard the roaring of the Tepic Plaza at the laguna, considerably over a mile. The picadors done with, the banderilleros, men

with little paper flags and devices, advance, and affix them to the neck of the bull. In Mexico fire-works are always added, an exceedingly barbarous addition, and which are never used in Spain, unless the bull proves a bad one. The fixing these torments is a matter of great nicety, and the performer is much applauded or hissed, as he succeeds or fails.

The final act of the tragedy is the death of the bull, which, with a good matador, is almost instantaneous. The death-blow is administered by a long sword, planted between the shoulders, which, I suppose, enters the heart. If a bull bleeds at the mouth, to any extent, even though he falls dead, it is considered a regular butchery, and the matador hissed unmercifully. When a bull will not *rush*, as is often the case, the matador piths him with the point of his sword between and behind the horns, and at this our Tepic Espada was very dexterous. I only once saw a bull killed dead by the usual thrust between the shoulders, and that was the performance of the celebrated Chiclanero, in Spain, the animal falling at his feet, as he withdrew his sword, as if struck by a cannon shot. The dead bulls and

horses are dragged out of the Plaza by horses gaily caparisoned with flags, and blindfolded.

In addition to the public bull-fights, aficianados or amateurs, in Mexico, are very fond of displaying their dexterity in the bull-ring, and it is really beautiful to see how some of these fellows, armed with nothing but their serapé, will keep a bull in check for ten minutes, wheeling their horses hither and thither, like lightning, and presenting nothing for the attack of the bull but the yielding serape. The lazo is largely used in all these popular amusements, and the accuracy with which a practised hand throws this fatal weapon is truly wonderful. Much amusement and excitement always attends the amateur theatricals, and friends and foes are applauded and hissed without mercy. Sometimes a horse is wounded, but seldom a man, though I once saw one badly hurt at Tepic. The management of an infuriated bull in any way, always seems to me a most desperate undertaking, and after once seeing an unfortunate wight killed in Spain, I never felt any desire to take my place among the aficianados.

Another amusement consists in *colearing* a bull, riding up to him at full speed, and getting hold of his

tail, placing it between the knee and the saddle of the performer, when, by a sudden turn of the horse, the bull finds himself on the ground with all four legs in the air.

Horse-racing is another amusement in which the neighbouring rancheros indulged largely, and many dollars were lost and won upon this colorado or that tordillo. This sport took place on the Llano where a good level course of some two hundred yards was to be met with. Mexican horses never run farther than this; they are ridden bare-backed, the rider encumbered with as little clothing as possible. They go very fast, but have seldom time to acquire their full speed before the race is won.

I saw several times a few of the original Indians, who live in the mountains at some distance from Tepic. They only come once or twice a year to the haunts of civilized man, and for the sole purpose of buying salt, with which they cure their skins and provisions. They are a small, dark race of people, with most inexpressive countenance. They are fantastically dressed, having bits of different coloured worsted, ribbons, and feathers stuck in their hats and on different parts of their attire. The men

wear tight-fitting breeches of buckskin, dressed by themselves, and very beautifully too. From these, down the outside of the leg, hang an infinity of strings, each of which is an emblem that the wearer has a corresponding cow, bullock, or pig at home. Of course, the more strings a man has attached to his breeches, the richer he is. In the party there is always one who speaks a little Spanish, and who serves as interpreter for his companions; and a great deal of argument in their own language takes place before they can make up their minds as to what they will give for their salt. They carry bows and arrows, in the use of which they are very expert, and with which they kill all their game. We used to amuse ourselves by sticking a fowl up against a door in the Patio for them to shoot at, the best shot to receive the animal. The distance was about thirty yards, and the fowl was always hit with the first two or three shots. Their arrows are made of some very hard wood, which stuck into the door with such force that the point was obliged to be broken off before they could be extricated. A few touches with a knife made it all right and ready for use again. These aborigines are nearly

extinct, the few still remaining disappearing fast. They are a very inoffensive race, and do not mix in any way with the rest of the world. I never yet met with anybody who knew exactly even where they lived. Like the Red Indians of North America, in travelling they always go in single file, even on the pavement of a town.

Tepic carries on a small import and export trade through its seaport San Blas, which I will notice by and by. Its whole internal manufacture consists of the manta made at the Jauxa factory, and at another called Bella Vista, some five leagues off; and of sugar manufactured at a single hacienda called Puga. We went one day to visit these establishments, which are both under the same management and in the same direction. Bella Vista (the cotton factory) is a magnificent building, in the Belgian style, even to the paint, and fitted with Belgian machinery; it is much larger than that of Jauxa, but has not been so profitable to its proprietors, although the same goods are made here as at the other. We got a capital breakfast here, and afterwards, in company with the manager, rode on to Puga, the sugar estate, some two leagues farther.

Within a couple of miles or so of the village and boiling-houses, we entered the estate, amid fields of sugar-cane stretching out on all sides. Puga is of much less elevation than Tepic, but still hardly in the tierra caliente. The soil is a rich red loam, and the cane appears to flourish capitally. Fine streams of water intersect the fields in every part, and small channels conduct this in whatever direction it may be wanted. The labourers in the fields are all natives, and I think that in the manufactory itself there are only three foreigners. The buildings at Puga were erected at great expense, and are very splendid. There is a corridor in front of the dwelling-house of the resident director which is really magnificent. I should think it is eighty yards long, by six or eight wide, and commands a beautiful view of the tierra caliente in the valley below. The boiling-houses are all very substantially built, and provided with a steam-engine which furnishes all the power required. The machinery is all Belgian, and appears well adapted to its end; especially a large crushing-mill, which squeezes the canes as flat as a sheet of paper, and from its being constantly supplied, keeps up a continued stream of the sweet

milky juice flowing into a large reservoir below. The sugar made on this estate is of very good quality, and the quantity large.

Attached to the boiling-house is a distillery, in which a very excellent kind of rum is made from the waste molasses. I was astonished to hear that no market could be found for this spirit, it being so greatly superior to the mescal, or Catalan brandy, the favourite drinks of the lower classes. I should think that the impulse the discoveries in California have given to every branch of trade in the west, would have some effect in helping to dispose of this article.

At a distance of a mile and a half from the manufactory is the most delightful bath I ever saw. The water is tepid, supplied by a natural spring in the bottom, and as clear as crystal. The tank containing this spring is about fifteen or twenty feet long by ten wide and five deep. At one end there is a sluice-gate over which the water is continually pouring, at the rate of many hundred gallons a minute, and yet the bath is always full, showing the immense supply from below.

Tobacco is grown somewhat largely at Compos-

tela, a town situate about eight or ten leagues to the south-west. This is brought into Tepic, and made into cigars in the town. They are certainly very good, and are, indeed, some of the best home-made articles in the republic.

The country round produces chiefly maize, some barley, and a little rice—the latter of an exceedingly good quality. The part of it in a state of cultivation, however, bears a small proportion to what is waste-land, or rather pasture-land, sometimes inclosed, but oftener not. Vast plains, covered with cattle, horses, and mules, stretch away in the direction of Guadalaxara, intersected with streams, and well furnished with springs of fine water. Most of this land belongs to some residents in Tepic. Some of these estates are famous for producing the bulls exhibited in the Plaza de Toros: they are bred and reared for the express purpose of the bull-fights.

Agriculture is rather backward here, as indeed throughout Mexico. The agricultural implements are exceedingly simple. A plough is merely a wooden pole with a large peg in it, which makes all the furrow that is required. From the nature of the

climate, draining and all such accessories deemed necessary to English farming, are unheard of; the difficulty generally being to get enough water, not to get rid of it.

The estate on which the rice is grown was a favourite haunt of mine for the purpose of duck shooting; it belongs to the superintendent of the maquina. Here there was a good supply of water from a small lake, into the upper end of which ran a stream of natural warm water issuing from the ground just above. This water was carried into the rice-fields, in which there were also many large ponds communicating with one another. When it was required to inundate the fields, which was done directly after sowing, these ponds were opened, and by damming up one ditch and opening another, the water was taken in the required direction, and spread over the ground, where it remained until the rice attained some height.

The waggon used for agricultural purposes is a large lumbering vehicle, with two enormous solid wooden wheels, which make the most excruciating noise I ever listened to; it is made of cane and drawn by oxen, generally six. They travel of course

very slow, but draw a great weight. Mules, however, are the staple means for carrying burdens in Mexico, and few days pass in which the traveller will not meet many hundreds.

Breeding horses and mules goes on in the plains around Tepic to a great extent. There are plenty of cows in the neighbourhood, but no butter is made, and the milk is very poor. During the rainy season I believe a small quantity of butter is procured from the cows belonging to the maquina, but the climate is much against this commodity. These cows are always wading about in the river below the maquina, and eat a great quantity of the refuse cotton that comes down with the stream. Whether it is for the sake of the oil or the seeds contained in it, I am ignorant, but I have seen them swallow pounds of this article. Towards the close of the dry season, when everything is burnt up, and not a blade of green grass to be seen for miles, cattle die in hundreds. I have seen four or five lying dead in one morning by the side of the laguna. This lake is always filled with cattle up to their backs in water, eating the coarse rough grass with which it abounds.

Two leagues from the town there is a pretty little place called Xalisco, the name of the province, and of which this village was once the capital. Most of the Tepiqueños have houses in it, and all move out there during the months of October and November. Xalisco is situated almost at the foot of the south-eastern corner of San Juan and is slightly higher than Tepic. Water is brought from the mountain by an aqueduct of open wooden troughs supported on poles, by the removal of one of which the whole population would be deprived of water, there being no wells or springs in the place.

Some four miles down the river there is a very fine fall, little known, but equal to many in Switzerland. I dare say it is eighty feet high, and the river at this point is of considerable size.

CHAP. IX.

TEPIC.

KILLING TIME—THE LAGUNA—DUCK-SHOOTING—DUCKS—OTHER AQUATIC BIRDS — LAND BIRDS — QUADRUPEDS — INSECTS — CASTILLON—SAN JUAN MOUNTAIN—GOLD-HUNTING.

HAVING now, I think, said nearly all there is to say about Tepic, its environs, and productions, I will try to give my reader some notion of the manner in which I passed my time among its inhabitants during my six months' residence. The house in which I lived was one of the mercantile houses I have mentioned above, the whole of the inmates of which were, more or less, constantly employed in the counting-house; consequently, at first, my time hung rather heavily on my hands. After a week or so of inaction I took to shooting, and continued this sport as long as I remained in Mexico.

The laguna, as I have before said, swarmed with wild ducks of all kinds, and snipes in myriads. I

was very difficult to approach the ducks when in the laguna itself, and the best sport in the immediate neighbourhood of the town was afforded by a small stream that ran from the river to the laguna. The banks of this were high, and it was quite easy under their shelter to approach the ducks which frequented it. During these shooting excursions I saw an immense number of animals, feathered and unfeathered, that I had only seen before in books, or in zoological gardens, and which, from their novelty, absorbed much of my attention. Towards the close of the dry season the laguna shrunk very much, and the streams and springs in the neighbourhood dried up. The ducks, which are said to follow the rain, disappeared too in a great measure, and I had to seek for my sport in drier spots. Whilst the country was still full of ducks I bagged a great many, and I regret that I am not an ornithologist, to describe the different varieties that came in the way of my gun.

I remember one day killing no less than six different kinds, from a large brown species with red legs, down to a diminutive blue-winged teal. Many of them were nearly white, with black heads, and

black tips to their wings. Some had narrow bills and others broad. The teal were, however, the most numerous, and I killed, from first to last, an immense number of these. The natives have little idea of shooting for sport's sake, and were highly delighted at seeing me knock them over on the wing. The common method with them is for a fellow to strip himself and wade into the laguna, keeping his head and gun above water. Here he remains for some time till the ducks are congregated pretty thick round him, and then lets fly into the middle of them. They must have tough skins —the men, not the ducks—as I one day waded in myself after a bird I had winged, and I did not recover my partial immersion for some hours. The sedgy grass is filled with some small stinging insect which plagued me dreadfully; for some time I felt as if I had been sitting in an ants' nest.

Great varieties of other aquatic birds are to be seen in the neighbourhood of Tepic. Cranes and herons of all kinds, black, white, and grey, crested, and without crest, are common. Pelicans but rarely are seen in the laguna. One immense bird, called (so Castillon told me) a Borigon, is common enough; it has a

body bigger than a swan, and moderately long legs, but with almost no neck, and an immense beak projecting from a small head, set deep between his shoulders. This bird is white, and has his wings edged with black; his legs, head, and beak being also black. Bitterns are very common, and beautiful birds they are. Curlews and snipes, great, small, and jack, abound. These last are absurdly tame; they never fly over twenty yards, and dropping in the open plain, even after being fired at and missed, feed without any fear of being again molested. Divers and water-rails frequent all the lakes and streams in myriads: some of the former are very graceful and elegant birds. Flamingoes, spoonbills, and birds of that kind, I met with occasionally, but seldom shot at any, save ducks and snipes. I think the most curious of the aquatic birds I saw was a large diver, with a neck almost as long as a swan, and short legs, which sat in trees by the waterside, and when frightened took to the water in great haste. This bird, which, I think, is called by Buffon, the black-bellied Darter, always chose a high and quite naked tree, and, before starting, moved his neck backwards and forwards, in a very curious style.

I often tried to procure a specimen, but ineffectually, as they were very wary, and their feathers too close set to admit of a long shot taking effect. A very pretty little bird, called Madrugador, or early-riser, of a brilliant yellow, was very common; as were also kingfishers of all sizes and colours.

The land birds are as various as the water, and I was much puzzled to find names for most of them. The commonest and most domestic is a handsome black fellow with a magnificent tail, and considerably larger than an English blackbird, called Sanati. He frequents all houses, and is even more impudent and self-sufficient than our common sparrow.

Starlings exist in immense tribes, some entirely black, others with brilliant yellow and crimson heads. I used to observe that these birds always roosted in the same spot, and retired to rest at the same time; till at last, when out with my gun I saw the starlings coming, I never required to look at my watch to know that it was also time for me to be jogging homeward. These flocks, containing immense numbers, had been all day scattered over the plains, picking up the vermin which fell from the cattle and mules, each of these animals being

always surrounded by some hundreds of these little birds. They were now returning to their homes, the main body always preceded and flanked by detached parties. This army extended often a quarter of a mile, and occupied two or three minutes in passing me, casting a distinct shadow on the ground as they flew. Occasionally the whole body made a sharp curve in their flight, always an indication that a hawk was looking out for stragglers.

The most beautiful of all the tierra templada birds is, I think, the cardinal, which is met with everywhere; it is of a bright crimson, and beautifully crested. Wild turkeys are also seen among the mountains not far from Tepic, but I had never the good luck to fall in with any.

Hawks of all kinds were very common, and I have seen eagles, but rarely; a companion one day killed one when out with me. There are some peculiar birds of the hawk species called "Bone-crushers," large and powerfully made, with beautiful red crests and eyes. These sit motionless upon stones and trees, never touching the carcase of any animal till the zopilotes have done with it, when they proceed

to remove whatever flesh still adheres to the bones, and get the marrow out of the bones themselves. I have also seen them attack small birds.

Many of the hawk tribe are most useful, from their destruction of snakes and other reptiles. I have often seen one soaring away with a snake a yard long wriggling in his claws. One of these birds once dropped his prey at sight of me. I found, on inspection, that the snake was not dead, but nearly so, his skull being laid entirely open with a severe peck. Castillon told me, one day, that the day before that, he had seen a hawk attack a snake too large for him, and that whilst he was carrying him off in mid air, the snake wreathed himself round the wings of the hawk or eagle (as my friend called him), and both came to the ground together. Although this is both an old and a poetical story, I will answer for it that my friend Castillon was never in the way of hearing it, and have no doubt whatever that he saw what he described.

There are plenty of owls, but one does not often meet with them in daylight, even in Mexico. Pigeons and doves of all kinds abound, and when my ducks and snipes failed me, I had capital sport

among the former in a thicket by the side of the laguna. There is a small sort of dove very beautiful, and very tame, no bigger than a thrush, of which numbers used to build in the orange trees, of the maquina garden. They appeared to live mostly on the ground and ran very nimbly; half a dozen of these little birds made as much noise in rising as a large covey of partridges. There were a few quail in the neighbourhood of Tepic, but I only twice saw any; those first seen were in a covey, much blacker on their backs than common English or Irish quails, and nearly as large as partridges. I had only my rifle, and did not of course succeed in bagging any. The next time, I fell in with a single bird in a field of maize, and winged him, but he got into such a dreadfully thick place in a barranca that I was obliged to give up all hopes of retrieving him.

Four-legged wild animals are not very plentiful in the neighbourhood of Tepic, and when I did see a rare one, I often, from my surprise and admiration, forgot to fire at it. Owing to this omission, I one day lost what I imagine to have been a fine young puma cub, very rare in the tierra templada.

He was of the size of a large cat, with a short tail, rather black on the back, and with very strong, thick legs.

Armadillos and iguana lizards are the two commonest animals, and swarm like rabbits, living like them in holes. I was one day walking by the side of the laguna, soon after my arrival, with my eye on some ducks quietly swimming about out of shot, when an armadillo bolted out of a bush close to me; I made sure it was a rabbit, and my gun went up to my shoulder instinctively. On seeing my new friend, however, I thought that small shot would be thrown away upon such a mass of scales as I saw leisurely retreating to its hole, and I did not fire. I killed one of them afterwards, more out of curiosity than for the use of the poor beast. It is the heaviest animal of its size I ever handled. They are easily tamed when young, and I have seen several in Tepic in the cottages. The iguana lizards are so exceedingly quick in getting to their holes, that you can seldom get a good look at one. However, I one day came upon a fellow unexpectedly in a large field, and cut him off from all retreat. I had a dog with me at the time, and the poor beast seemed to pay no attention

to me, but followed the dog with his bright eyes all round the enclosure. Killing him would have done me no good, as he would have been neither useful nor ornamental, so I dropped my gun to have a good look at him, and to admire his shape and demeanour. He was at least four feet long from the tip of his nose to that of his tail, and the whole side of his back was covered with a crest of spines, which he appeared to move at pleasure. His head was very broad, blunt, and exceedingly ugly withal, having a species of cheek pouches hanging from his jaws. Though I was standing within a yard of him, the dog alone engaged his attention, and having at last seen him safely behind a bush, off bolted my friend, and gained his hole without molestation. His long body and short awkward legs did not promise any great rate of locomotion, but he did go, and as fast as any hare I ever saw in my life. These beasts are very harmless, and are occasionally eaten by the poor people, who consider them a specific in some disorders.

Hares and rabbits are met with in the neighbourhood of Tepic, but not in any great numbers. Lizards of all kinds abound, and the frogs at night

in the laguna and other stagnant places, are most melodious. I remember one night coming home after dark with my attendant, when these animals were making a prodigious noise, especially one patriarchal fellow, who sat on a stone just out of the water, and appeared to be drowsily hearing the complaints of his kindred, only waking up now and then to give a judgment, which he did in the deepest frog-voice I ever heard. Little water-turtles or tortoises sit on all the stones, and even in trees, beside the water. They are similar to the stones in colour, so that one does not perceive them until they jump in with a great splash. I one day killed one with my rifle. On examining him I found he was provided with an apparatus for closing his shell, at pleasure, by means of a sort of lid at either end.

In my excursions I met with a vast number of insects, quite new to me and apparently very curious, but of which my utter ignorance of entomology prevents me giving any account. I will only notice one or two of those most remarkable and best known.

As the summer advanced scorpions (alacranes)

and centipedes made their appearance in considerable numbers. Castillon told me one day that he was once out shooting with a gentleman who was stung by one of the former, and he had to bring him home "como un venado"—like a deer. These scorpions are very plentiful in the tierra caliente, and we saw quite as much as I liked of them at Tepic. A servant belonging to our house was one day stung whilst reaching down a dish from a shelf in the kitchen; in a quarter of an hour the man became insensible, and revived in convulsions which lasted for some hours, and he did not recover the use of his tongue for more than twenty. The remedies used were strong doses of ammonia and brandy and water; neither his finger, the part stung, nor his arm swelled in the least. One day while playing billiards, I was informed that a spot of dirt was upon my white jacket; a kind friend trying to brush it off was horrified to see the supposed spot erect a horrid tail and run into my pocket. I promise you the jacket came off pretty quickly, and my tailed friend was ejected from his retreat, and after a good hunt killed in the trowsers of the marker.

I had often heard of the wonderful suicide committed by these animals, when inclosed in a circle of fire; and when at San Blas, I procured some for the experiment, but my sport was spoiled by the master of the house in which I was staying, who, as soon as my back was turned, clapped them into a bottle of spirits. However, I have since heard from eye-witnesses, that it is a fact, that if a scorpion is put into a circle of burning charcoal, he runs round the ring, and finding no escape, returns to the middle, and thrusts his sting into his own head.

They are said often to kill children; and I myself have heard, since I left Mexico, that a fine young colt, the offspring of an old mare of mine, has been killed by the sting of one of these animals. It is commonly believed that a scorpion, removed to a country sufficiently elevated, such as the city of Mexico, which is 4000 feet higher than Tepic, loses his venom, and his sting becomes harmless, though the animal is not in any way affected in his health or appetite.

Centipedes are known to have the same venomous bite as the sting of the scorpion; but I never witnessed a case of this sort.

The insect most dreaded, rarely met with in Tepic, but often at Puga and San Blas, is a huge sort of spider, the body the size of a walnut and the legs eight or nine inches in length. This animal is called vinagrillo, from the peculiar vinegar smell attached to it, and which luckily points out its whereabout. A bite from this beast is said to be certain death.

There is an amazing variety of other insects to be met with, all, no doubt, very curious to a naturalist. Among them I will only mention two—the "Matacaballo," so called from the belief that a horse dies from eating one of them; and another sort of grub, whose name I forget, which buries itself in the ground just before death, and from whose body always springs a small tree of the same species. There were several of these plants in Tepic, growing in flower-pots. The matacaballo has the aspect of an animated blade of dry grass, with fibrous legs, and which may be seen to move, after a long inspection, among the mass of fodder spread before a horse.

My amusement with the smooth bore was often varied by a walk with my rifle in search of deer; and

in the prosecution of this sport I went over a great deal of country, and became intimately acquainted with all the mountains in the neighbourhood of Tepic. My usual plan of proceeding was to start in company with my worthy cazador, Castillon, about daybreak, carrying provisions and water with us. We made all play in the cool of the morning to reach the high ground intended for the day's sport, before the sun became very powerful; but it was always nine o'clock before we managed to arrive at the top of San Juan, when our beat lay in that direction.

This San Juan is a beautifully-wooded mountain, about 3000 feet above the level of the plain at Tepic; it is very steep, and without any regular path to the top, except in one direction, some distance from the town. The timber with which it is covered is almost entirely pine, the dry leaves from which strew the whole mountain, and are so slippery that they render the walking extremely bad. I ascended this mountain four or five times, once on horseback, with a friend, but only once with any success. The view from the top, in every direction, is splendid, and when the day was clear, and the tierra caliente

below free from fog, the sea at San Blas, distant fifty miles, was plainly visible. We generally rested an hour or so during the heat of the day. No water was to be found in the mountain during the dry season, and we were always obliged to carry it with us.

My companion in these excursions, Castillon, was a simple, honest fellow, very dark, and with a little Spanish blood in his veins. As I mentioned before, he could read, but was extremely ignorant of other sublunary accomplishments, especially in matters of geography. During these midday halts we always had some amusing conversation, though, with my bad Spanish and his provincial twang, it was often difficult for us to make each other out. His ideas of Europe were very limited; the only country he had heard of before, in that direction, being Spain, and he often asked me whether Europe and England were not both in Spain. However, we were capital company for each other, and I would not wish a quieter or more pleasant fellow in a shooting expedition in strange lands. From his great knowledge of the mountains, he could pick out all the likely spots for deer, and always kept his eyes on the ground, noticing the slightest trace

of his game, even though it were only a broken twig. The first time I took out my spy-glass, which was a very good one, Castillon was as much delighted as any pure savage could have been, and I could hardly get it away from him, especially after he thought that he had made out his wife washing in the river at the distance of two or three miles. Like all the poorer Mexicans, who rarely see a clock, he was a great adept at telling the time of day by a look at the sun, and I think, in many trials I made of his proficiency in this respect, he was seldom ten minutes out in his reckoning.

Castillon was an excellent walker, a rare character in Mexico. He was always attired in shirt, drawers, and sandals. On arriving at stiff ground he took off the latter, rolled his drawers up entirely, and was then ready to go through prickly pear bushes, or any thing else. His skin must have been like leather, for he never seemed damaged by thorns that even penetrated the soles of my shoes. The only day in which we killed a deer, he carried it, I dare say, ten miles, and never complained of fatigue. The fore and hind legs were tied together, and passed over his forehead, the body of the animal hanging

down his back. I was often severely bitten whilst on these mountain excursions by ants and other insects, especially by one fellow called an arriero—so Castillon said—which held on like a bulldog, and made a great swelling where it fixed. In the tierra caliente it is dangerous to go into the wood which is there called the Monté, as it is full of all manner of insects, chiefly "gueenas" and "garapitos," which burrow in a man's skin, bringing up a large family in the cavity they make, if not immediately extracted.

Castillon one day took me to see a robber's cave, situated on one side of San Juan. This was very large, with a delightful spring of water bubbling up at the entrance: it was almost choked up with heaps of pumice-stone, of which nearly the whole mountain is composed. I asked him the meaning of these heaps, and he replied, "Algunos lojos buscando oro Señor" (some fools looking for gold), which was supposed to have been buried by the robbers in this repository. This gold or treasure-hunting is very common everywhere, and I used to pass a dozen pits in a day, all of which, he said, had been dug by people in search of hidden treasure.

One day he told me how a gentleman, from the city of Mexico, applied to him, as more cognisant of the mountains than any other Tepiqueño, for information respecting a large grey stone in San Juan, with divers signs and crosses upon it. He knew the stone, and showed it to the gentleman, and was then dismissed with a good reward, and promise of another of a different kind if he remained to watch his employer's proceedings. Castillon could not tell me the exact sequel, but he said there was a treasure found in the neighbourhood of this stone, of 25,000 dollars, which the gentleman and his servants carried away upon mules. I will leave my readers to believe that or not, as they like.

These mountains are never frequented by anybody but charcoal burners, and Castillon used to tell me I was the only foreigner who had been there; but in this he was a little out, as one of my friends in Tepic once ascended to the top of San Juan. At the end of the dry season the grass on all the neighbouring mountains is set on fire, and at night the whole country often seems in one continued blaze; the strange part of this burning is, that the trees are never consumed, and seeing that they are all

pine, I thought this very remarkable. I used to pass acres upon acres of ground which had been burnt, the trees occasionally scorched, but I never saw one even killed by the fire that had raged round them.

Nearly all the neighbouring hills, as well as St. Juan, received some share of my attention in the way of walking, and I will undertake to say, that I know the country in the immediate neighbourhood of Tepic better than any resident of the place, save Castillon, and I was there only six months.

CHAP. X.

SAN BLAS.

ROUTES FROM TEPIC—JOURNEY—SCENERY—TIERRA CALIENTE—ESTEROS—SAN BLAS—BAY—CLIMATE—CALIFORNIAN STEAMERS—YANKEES—TREE OYSTERS—FISHING—TRADE—ONIONS—CALIFORNIAN FEVER—A BALL—ANOTHER JOURNEY—DAYBREAK IN THE FOREST—SALT-WORKS—AN ALLIGATOR—FAREWELL TO MEXICO.

I TWICE visited SAN BLAS before I finally left Tepic; and as my route, the last time, was by a different road from that I had before gone, I may as well say something about my earlier journies. On my first journey, I went in company with a friend merely to have a look at San Blas, the Pacific, and a Californian-bound steamer daily expected to arrive; on the second, to see the same friend on board the same steamer bound to California, where he still flourishes if not burnt out in the last fire.

There are three roads from Tepic to San Blas: one by the mountains and only passable for horses and mules; another passable half-way by carriages;

and a third more circuitous, which admits carriages the whole distance. How well it admits them, however, may be judged by this:—I remember an express arriving one night to inform us that a new English carriage lately landed at San Blas, and coming to Tepic by this route, had stuck by the way, owing to some large stones in the middle of the road, over which the front wheels were not sufficiently high to lift the body of the vehicle. In both my rides to San Blas we did the distance in one day; although, unless people are pressed for time, two are generally taken: however, I think it much less fatiguing to ride fast and get the work over, than to ride slow and be for two days baked in the sun like a pie. The first time we started before daylight, and, with fresh horses awaiting us at the half-way house, where we rested, reached San Blas at about three in the afternoon. The next time we did not start till after breakfast, I think about nine, and did not stop at all on the road. We at once mounted our fresh horses at the half-way house, and arrived at San Blas in considerably under eight hours, much less tired than the time before. The distance from Tepic

to San Blas is said to be twenty leagues. I think, however, by the mountain-road it is not more than fifty miles. One of my friends once rode before breakfast the entire distance on the same horse, in five hours and a half. Imagine a man mounting his horse in London at five in the morning, and arriving in Brighton at half-past ten, and you will have some idea of a performance like this in latitude twenty-two.

The scenery all along this mountain-road is most beautiful. After leaving Tepic, a couple of miles or more bring the traveller to the edge of the tierra templada and he sees the tierra caliente fading away in the distance below him covered with a thin blue haze. At first I mistook this for the sea; the high land shooting up here and there like so many islands; and got much laughed at, one morning, after an early ride, when I declared I had seen the sea quite plain.

The first few leagues when you begin to descend, lead through fine cultivated ground, well supplied with water, and broken up in all directions by arroyos and small barrancas. The first village passed is denominated Alameda, and a very garden the country

about it certainly is; though whether that is the reason the village is so called or not I don't know. On leaving this fine cultivated land you enter a long plain, lying on the ridge of a steep hill, and affording beautiful views on either side, the vast bulk of San Juan filling up the whole background on the left hand; whilst far away to the right, appears a fine range of mountains, remarkable for their peaks and abrupt angles, lying beyond the Rio Grande.

After passing the first barranca, a weary toil of half an hour over a wretched road or footpath brings the traveller into a fine wood of Mexican oak, often producing acorns worthy of the gallows. My companion informed me he once found some wretched travellers in this wood, who had been robbed, and were tied to trees, awaiting the advent of some kind Samaritan. Proceeding over some miles of pleasant level road, broken by an occasional barranca, we arrive at Guinamota, the half-way house. A space has been here cleared in the forest, and half a dozen houses built, one of which is the inn at which we found our spare horses; these, after taking a refreshing drink of lemonade, we immediately mounted, and pushed on. A mile more brought us to the

top of a tremendous hill, the view from which is superb, and the sea for the first time distinctly visible. This descended, you find yourself at once in the tierra caliente, with its groups of palms and its gorgeous green parrots everywhere; and the magnificent pheasant and little variegated humming-bird constantly in sight, the one perched on some lofty tree, the other buzzing about among the flowers like a large bee.

About a league further on, after passing through a fine wood with prodigious trees, their great roots projecting into the road on all sides, we reached the bottom of another short but very steep hill, having previously crossed two or three beautiful streams of water, going to supply some fields of maize which we passed on our right. The road up this hill is wretched, and would almost puzzle a Swiss goat; but as Mexican horses always seemed to me to have much of this animal in their compositions, we climbed up the ragged stone steps in great style. Then ensued three or four leagues of a desperately-hot plain, bare of trees, save a few scattered palms, but covered with long grass and brilliant flowers, and, luckily, ending in a famous shady wood. The

road through this was intolerably bad, but the shade of the trees very refreshing after the baking experienced in the plain just passed. The trees are very thick and the jungle quite impenetrable, the whole being so tied together with creepers as to form almost a solid mass. Wild bananas in full flower—a beautiful scarlet—were here in hundreds; palms of all kinds; the banyan or wild fig tree, with its many supplementary arms; and all the other splendid productions of tierra caliente. I saw here also many of those gorgeous blue butterflies which are nearly as large as the crown of one's hat.

On emerging from this wood, we got into a good level road, which was many years ago planned and made by the English resident of Tepic I have before mentioned. A league or more of this, entirely built up on piles and brushwood, being through the middle of a most unwholesome swamp, brings you to the edge of an estero or arm of the sea, which seems to forbid farther progress. But the horses and mules are unloaded; the traveller and his servants along with their trappings embark in a canoe; the animals led by the mozo take naturally to the water, and the canoe is paddled across, the

animals swimming where it is too deep for them to walk. When they reach land, the saddles are again put upon their reeking backs, and five minutes more bring you and them to San Blas and the shores of the Pacific.

These esteros are much frequented by alligators, and I was told that a fine dog, not long before I passed, and which was following his master in a canoe, was carried off by one of these animals.

Taken as a whole, San Blas is a miserable place. Before the revolution it was a town of much importance, and the principal seaport of Mexico on the Pacific; but its glory has all departed, and gone to Mazatlan, a hundred miles farther up the coast. San Blas consists of two towns, or rather the remains of them. One of these is on the sea-shore, and the other on a steep little hill, distant a mile from the former. The town on the hill was, and still is, the fashionable part of the place, and is built in the form of a square, containing a few good houses. On the west side of this is situated the custom-house and its warehouses, built on the edge of a precipice, with a beautiful terrace behind it, commanding a magnificent view of the coast for miles in either

direction. The other habitable houses belong to officials of the custom-house, and some of the Tepic merchants.

San Blas is much frequented by the Tepiqueños, who, during the latter part of the dry season, come down for the sake of sea-bathing; and the sight of people riding on the sands, and ladies plunging about in the water, give, at that time, an air of life to the place, which, in general, it is sadly in want of. Mosquitoes and sandflies are here very troublesome, but much less so on the hill than below. I took up my quarters, on each visit, at the house of a gentleman in the lower town, the agent not only of my mercantile friends and of the captain of the port, but also the mayor and great man of the town.

San Blas stands in the bight of a deep bay, beautifully wooded, and surrounded with mountains, my old friend San Juan occupying a prominent place in the landscape. The water at the town is very bad, and what ships come here always go some distance down the bay to procure it good. On the beach stand the ruins of an old arsenal belonging to the Spanish government, destroyed by fire; and plenty of old anchor stocks and other marine relics

are seen protruding from the sand in all directions. There are the means for a very fair harbour here, a a deep channel running up some distance; and did the trade of the place warrant the use of a mud-dredging machine, I have no doubt it might be made a very good one.

The climate I thought delicious, compared with that of Tepic. The night and the day were almost equally hot, but a sea breeze prevailing during the day and a land one at night, keep up a most delightful fanning. All tierra caliente fruits are here in profusion, and our corral boasted some half-a-dozen cocoanut trees, full of their pleasant nuts. The beach consists entirely of sand and fragments of shells; no shingle at all being visible. This is very disagreable for bathers, but they must put up with it. Some kind individual had erected a shed of green boughs just above high-water mark, and here we could undress without being blistered by the sun. The temperature of the sea was very high, but the pleasure of bathing was much spoiled by fear of sharks, which are very plentiful and voracious, especially an ugly fellow called a shovel-nosed shark, which, I am told, is rare on other parts of the coast.

The scene on the arrival of a steamer, either up to California or down from thence, is most amusing. These vessels carry the mails, and are very regular in their arrivals, calling at San Blas once a month, either way. They are always crowded with passengers, and a most curious-looking set of individuals they are. The steamers stop some four or five hours, and all the passengers who can find boats, come pouring ashore, to buy fruits or get "a drink." The coolness of these fellows surpasses belief. Two or three times have I been sitting with friends at the door of our house, on the arrival of one of these importations, and every time, owing, I presume, to its being the first habitation in the village, have we been inundated by these dirty red-shirted gentry, clamouring for liquor and other matters, and not to be persuaded that it was not a public-house, though bearing, I am sure, no signs of one. The costume of a gold-digger on his homeward trip is—a red worsted shirt, very dirty; no waistcoat, or if one, of black satin; a pair of black trousers, very dirty, thrust inside boots, also very dirty; and the upper man crowned with a black hat, very bad; beard, moustache, and tobacco at discretion. The outward-

bound Californian Yankee is a shade cleaner and neater in his apparel. The arrival of these steamers must be a capital thing for San Blas, as far as spending money goes, but a dreadful nuisance to the respectable portion of the inhabitants.

On my second visit to San Blas I remained a whole week, and had thus time to see something of the country. The immediate neighbourhood, with the exception of the hill before mentioned, is all marsh, covered by an impenetrable thicket of mangrove and acacia bushes. On the former of these, curious to relate, are borne that well-known and favourite fruit the oyster, which is considered to be in perfection at San Blas. These mangroves overhang the esteros and their branches drop into the water; to these during the floodtide the oysters adhere, and when the water ebbs the branches with their living burden are left high and dry; so that a hungry man in a canoe, at the right time of tide, may gather any quantity of this sort of fruit he pleases.

We used to occupy ourselves chiefly in fishing, and caught a good many fish. They were all small, but brilliantly coloured and good eating. On one

of these fishing excursions I was made fully aware of the power of the sun. Being without a coat, I rolled up my shirt sleeve to enable me to handle my line with more ease. I remained fishing for some two or three hours, and the next morning found my arm so swelled and inflamed I could hardly get my coat on, and it eventually became one large blister.

Turtles are always floating about in these esteros, but don't seem to me to sleep as much as I thought they did, as I never had a chance of capturing one.

One day I went for a sail with the captain of a small schooner lying in the harbour, in his boat, and we took our way to the mouth of an estero at some distance from the town. We were in hopes of shooting some ducks but did not succeed. However, we met a picnic party numbering all the eligible people in San Blas, which I had been asked to join but declined: they were embarked in half a dozen large canoes, with men paddling. Music of a most melancholy cast was going on in one of these, and I thought it the most distressing looking case of forced amusement I ever saw. Neither lady nor gentleman smiled or said anything, and had I not known that they were really enjoying

themselves, I should have imagined they were going to deposit the ashes of some departed friend on the little rocky islands at the entrance to the estero.

The only trade at San Blas in the way of exports was, until lately, the Brazil-wood (dye-wood), which is found in large quantities in two places a little farther down the coast, one the bay of Banderas, and the other Ipala. Both of these belong to merchants in Tepic, and a great quantity of this valuable wood is yearly exported to England. Since the Californian discoveries a flourishing trade in provisions has lately sprung up between San Blas and San Francisco; and hardly a week passes that some vessel or other does not sail from San Blas bound to the latter port with provisions and passengers. Vegetables and fruits are the chief articles of export; but I have also seen vessels laden with mules, maize, packs of cards, and fighting-cocks. Onions, however, are the great thing. For these there is a large demand in California—the Yankees eating onions as we eat apples—the neighbourhood of Tepic being one of the few places on the Mexican coast where these luxuries can be procured in perfection. When I left San Blas onions were selling at a dollar and a half per

pound in the market of San Francisco. At this time one of the residents in Tepic bought for export some seventy thousand of the precious fruit. For these he paid six dollars a thousand, and each thousand contained two hundred pounds. Assuming that he paid a pretty high price for carriage, and lost many by decay and in other ways, the reader will see that there will probably still remain a good per centage for the outlay of money and risk. I mention this fact merely to show how money may be made in California without actually digging for it.

The imports at San Blas are very small, three or four ships only, arriving every year from Europe with a general cargo. There is also a small coasting trade to Mazatlan and the Gulph of California. However, within the last few months, a new branch of trade, likely to be of great importance, has sprung up; quicksilver for the use of the silver mines, being imported, in large quantities, from the new and wealthy mine of New Almaden, in California. One arrival, during our stay at Tepic, was very curious, viz., a small schooner of only twenty-three tons, from New Zealand, bound to California.

She had seventeen people, men, women, and children on board, and put into San Blas, entirely out of provisions and water, having been four months on her voyage.

A great deal of silver from the Mexican mines is exported from San Blas, and taken to England by our men-of-war. There is not the same regulation on the coast of the Pacific as at Guanaxuato about exporting bar silver, the metal being allowed to leave the country in any shape. The commonest kind which chiefly comes from small mines in the neighbourhood of Tepic, is what is called Plata Piña, that is, small pieces of irregular shape, with sometimes a little native silver among it.

Gold from California finds its way, in large quantities, to San Blas and Tepic, and thence round the Horn to England. For some time we had a noble bit of 14½ lbs. weight in our house. The Californian fever has spread over Mexico very extensively, and from the inhabitants being such a gambling, mining race generally, immense numbers have gone to the "diggings." Every ship that left San Blas, whilst I was in Tepic, was crowded with passengers, though the fares were very high. I saw many of

these people return, more or less dilapidated, but all with some share of the precious metal; and from their knowledge of mining in all its branches—a knowledge which seems inherent in a Mexican—I should imagine that they often got more dust than the harder-working, strong-limbed Yankee.

On returning from San Blas the second time I was alone, and rode very fast, accomplishing the distance in six hours and fifty minutes, only stopping a quarter of an hour, to shift my saddle and drink some lemonade. I was accompanied the first half of my journey by a capital fellow, the Capitan del Puerto, a captain in the Mexican navy, but who had also during the war served in the army, and been taken prisoner by the Americans. To my great surprise I found, on arriving at the half-way house, that the worthy man had no other horse, and as both ours were beat to a stand still, I left him there, and pursued my journey alone with the fresh horse I had left waiting for me. The Capitan did not arrive in Tepic till late the next day.

During the latter part of my stay in Tepic, we had some arrivals from Mexico to enliven us; and also Hertz, the great pianist, from California. He had so

delighted the wild Yankees in "Sacramento city," as they call it, that they had presented him with a chain made of bits of rough gold, strung together in the state in which they were found. Hertz gave us some concerts at Tepic, and we, in return, gave him a ball, which was admirably conducted and well attended. The ladies were all smartly dressed, with plenty of jewellery, and made a much better appearance than I thought they would have done. The ball, on the whole, was not much unlike a country ball in England, with the exception that some of the gentleman did not pay very strict attention to costume, coming in any-coloured trousers and short jackets to match.

In the way, or rather ways, I have mentioned in the preceding chapters, I passed my time with my kind hosts until the 8th of June, when I set out on my return homewards. I had before written to California, to take a passage from thence to Panama, if requisite; a very necessary precaution, when the steamers were so over-crowded. I was accompanied to San Blas by my friendly host, her Majesty's consul, and El Capitan, and we were

attended by some ten servants—with a train of five or six baggage mules—so that we made rather an imposing cavalcade. This time we went by a different road, with the exception of the first four leagues. Entering on our new route, we turned to the right, and by five o'clock reached Manuela the half-way village. The country was much the same as I described before, but not so pretty as by the other road. Manuela was not destined to be our stopping-place, a fine large rancho, a mile or two farther, belonging to Don Gaetano Madrigal, being placed at our disposal. We soon reached this, and did justice to a capital dinner furnished by our entertainer; after which, erecting our beds all in one room, we made the most of the cool breeze of the tierra caliente, as we swung in our hammocks. Nothing occurred to disturb the harmony of our repose, save the usual wriggling and scuffling of snakes, lizards, rats, &c., always going on in the thatched roofs of tierra caliente, and the dropping of a young rat, quite a baby-rat, nearly into the mouth of my friend and late host as he lay face uppermost.

We started just at daybreak the next morning, and a ride of ten leagues on a dead level, and nearly

all sand, brought us to San Blas by the middle of the day. The first half of this road was through a forest of enormous trees, swarming with parrots, wheeling and screaming like seagulls. We saw also a great many pheasants, and shot with a rifle at some, but unsuccessfully. The pheasant of the tierra caliente is black with white spots, square-cut tail, crested, a noble-looking bird, and nearly as big as an English turkey. Daybreak in a tropical forest is a sight never forgotten. From the dead silence everything in five minutes changes to the most active life; beasts and birds of all kinds, insects, gorgeous butterflies, all come out from their beds to enjoy themselves in the first rays of the sun, and make the whole forest ring with their various noises. The parrots of Mexico are mostly green, with yellow or red heads, and are admirable talkers, very gentle, and without the spite of their grey African brethren.

Half-way between the rancho and San Blas we stopped to inspect some salt-works of which my host is the proprietor. The salt was stored in an immense barn, and was of fine quality. During the rainy season the whole of this plain is under water, and the salt warehouse standing on a hill

becomes an island, where its keeper, like Robinson Crusoe, lives alone until the abatement of the floods.

Whilst stopping here, Her Majesty's Consul started off with his rifle to have a shot at a venerable alligator, which was basking in the sun on the sand by the side of an estero. The unfortunate brute had eaten his last dog, and died in two shots, both of which struck him full in the back and in the middle of the scales, though I had always understood these to be impenetrable. For my especial edification the beast was lazoed and dragged out of the water, to which he had retreated on receiving his death-wound. He was ten feet long, and furnished with a prodigious row of teeth, with which, in his death agonies, he nearly took off the leg of one of the mozos. My friend was waited upon by a deputation of ladies from the nearest village, who felicitated him upon destroying the venerable monster who for many months had lived upon their pet dogs.

A league or so more and we came to the salt-works themselves, passing over a sandy plain, in many places covered with water, and, where dry,

glittering with a crust of salt. At the proper season, *i. e.*, the dry one, water from the sea is permitted to overflow these plains, upon which the sand has been already loosened and scraped into a sort of soft bed; as this evaporates, more water is admitted, and so they go on, until the sand becomes so impregnated with salt that it will hold no more. It is then taken to a washing apparatus, and the water in which the sand is washed comes out a complete brine, which is then conducted into small pans paved with hard plaster and exposed to the sun. The salt crystallises very fast in these, and is then removed to the warehouses. This manufacture is an important article of trade, a great quantity of salt being made every year and sold to all the country round. I remember my host saying one evening when it looked threatening—"If it rains to-night I lose 15,000 dollars' worth of salt;" but it did not rain, and his salt and dollars were saved.

My last evening in San Blas was distinguished and concluded by a fandago, got up expressly to do honour to my friends from Tepic. Two candles were stuck in posts placed in the middle of the street, and some planks laid down, whereon the

performers danced until they were heartily tired. We were accommodated with chairs, and all the rest of the audience stood round in an admiring crowd.

The next morning the good ship "Oregon" made her appearance, and I ascertained that a single cabin was at my disposal—a great luxury, as there was only two in the ship. My agent in California luckily found a passenger bound to San Blas, who occupied this cabin the first half of the journey, and gave it up to me for the last. My friends saw me and my traps safe on board, and not without regret I bade adieu to Mexico and the Tepiquenos.

CHAP. XI.

SAN BLAS TO CHAGRES.

CALIFORNIAN STEAMERS — PASSENGERS — A DINNER PARTY — ACAPULCO—CROWDING AND HEAT—PANAMA—RUINS AND REVIVAL—NATIVES—ACROSS THE ISTHMUS—BAD MULES—BAD ROADS —BAD HOUSES—BUT FINE SCENERY—CRUCES—DOWN THE RIVER CHAGRES.

THE "Oregon" is a fine large steamer of over a thousand tons, built expressly for the Californian trade, and is one of a line established some time, and before the discovery of the gold took place. We had about 260 passengers, a hundred in the cabin, and the rest forward. They were all much of the same stamp of persons as I have before described, and among them, of course, a very tolerable sprinkling of colonels, captains, judges, majors and other dignitaries of like kind. Even the ship's purser was a captain. Not satisfied with their own honors, divers tried to saddle me with a warlike title also. The first day at dinner one of the servants brought me a message to the

effect that the captain of the ship, a very pleasant gentlemanly man, an officer in the United States navy, wished to have the pleasure of taking wine with Captain F., meaning me.

The first of these steamers I boarded at San Blas was bound up to California, and I had some conversation with a gentleman who answered to the title of colonel, the said officer being dressed in red worsted shirt with his trousers inside his boots. In the present instance, I think our military men looked a little more respectable; but, with the exception of some half-dozen, I would not have given much for the wardrobe of the entire cabin passengers. The officers of the ship were certainly the most gentlemanly men on board, and very pleasant fellows.

The engineer was an Englishman, and told me he liked the ship and service very much. We had one luxury on board that ought to be attended to, I think, in English steamers, viz. a good bath placed on the sponson, and which was always engaged many deep. This was farmed out, I presume, to one of the steerage passengers; at all events, it was attended to by him. He received half a dollar for every bath, and as it was always occupied from

morning to night, he must have made a good thing of it.

The cabin was very bad, dreadfully close, and so dark that the captain always required a light to see to carve at his end of the table. Owing to the great number on board, we were divided into two parties, and each division plunged headlong down to feed at the first tinkle of the bell, there being no unnecessary waiting or politeness, but every man for himself, and some, as it would seem, for two or three. So quick was the execution, that I have seen some of my neighbours leave the table almost before I had swallowed my soup. One huge Kentuckian usually sat opposite to me, and generally preferred dining without his coat; he had arms like the sails of a windmill, and swung them about to some purpose, sweeping, pell-mell, into his plate, something of every dish he could reach: he never minded the incongruity of the different messes—it was all one to him; and the fork that was one moment in his mouth, was, the next, buried in the recesses of a squash pie, and served as a toothpick when his cravings were satisfied. The purser, worthy man, was in despair to see his food so handled; and having

servants most ignorant of their business, the confusion at dinner was immense. The servants were all passengers working their passage: one of them told me he had tried a good many things in his life, but never before the trade of a waiter, and he would take care he did not try it again in a hurry. The food itself was not first-rate, but quite as good as I expected on board such a disorderly ship, and nearly as good as we got in the English steamer.

The ship was very dirty on deck, and had a nasty trick of raining ashes from the funnel in clouds, which rendered every place most filthy. Spitting-boxes were liberally dispersed about, but seldom used; consequently it was a difficult matter to find a clean place to sit down. However, the ship was fast, the weather lovely, and all were going home; so we passed our time pleasantly enough, the passengers, if not very refined in their generation, being, as far as I saw, very pleasant and amusing fellows. From some of them I got a good deal of information about California, but having taken no notes I will say nothing about it. We had a large freight of gold on board, viz., 2,500,000 dollars, and

all the passengers had with them more or less, most of it in the shape of dust.

On the second morning after leaving San Blas we came in sight of the entrance to Acapulco, and anchored inside the harbour soon after nine. We had as yet kept in sight of land all the way, which was very high and, a little away from the shore, well wooded, the cliffs in many places rising perpendicularly from the sea, and looking very like the west coast of Scotland. The evening before we entered Acapulco we met the upward-bound steamer, the "California," and stopped side by side for half an hour to hold a conversation. The Pacific when I saw it was always as smooth as glass, and we had little wind during our voyage; but American steamers, I apprehend, from being crankly built, have a wonderful tendency to roll, and whilst we were exchanging compliments with the California, both vessels were nearly rolling their paddle-boxes under.

The entrance to Acapulco is well concealed by some small islands, and is indeed so difficult to find, that our captain told me the steamers, if the weather was at all thick, from not being able to find it, often

passed without calling. A narrow entrance, with half a mile or so of a circuitous channel, leads into a beautiful landlocked harbour, nearly circular, and surrounded by hills covered with vegetation. I think it is the prettiest as well as safest harbour I ever was in, and very like Vigo, in the north of Spain. We remained here nearly two days to coal, sailing on the evening of the second. Acapulco itself is a wretched little village, worse, if anything, than San Blas. There is only one good house in the place that I saw, and that belongs to the American consul.

The first day I did not go ashore at the town, only hiring a canoe for the purpose of bathing in a remote part of the bay. The water was as clear as crystal, and the bath very delicious; but that horrid bugbear, the "shark," spoils all the pleasure one has in swimming about in the Pacific. The second day I went to the town with a fellow-passenger, who told me he had made a capital trip to California from Valparaiso, and pocketed a good deal of money in four months. We walked all over the place, and spent some time, pleasantly swinging in a hammock belonging to a butcher, under some trees beside

his shop. He was wild about going to California, and I dare say has gone ere this.

One large house at the landing-place is turned into an American hotel, where all the national "drinks" are to be met with; and this place seemed to be crowded from morning to night. Some half dozen ships were lying in the harbour, all bound to California; one sailed the same evening as ourselves. The coal was brought alongside in launches, and taken on board in sacks,—a tedious process, I fancy, but far more agreeable to passengers than the method pursued in the English steamers on the other side, where everything is smothered in coal-dust during this operation. Almost all our passengers were ashore whilst we stayed at Acapulco, and repeated the process I before mentioned, of walking into anybody's house, and sitting there for any length of time, regardless of the wishes of the proprietor.

We left Acapulco in the evening, and the next morning found ourselves out of sight of land, and saw little of it again until we passed some islands before entering the gulf of Panama. The heat during the whole of this voyage was intolerable. I never saw the thermometer below 92°. The slightest

motion made one perspire so awfully, that active exercise on board was out of the question. We passed our time talking, smoking, and chewing; those who had books read, but the readers seemed to be a small proportion. One division of the passengers who had applied too late for good berths, were placed in a sort of omnibus under the floor of the cabin, and this must have been a very black hole of Calcutta. There was no windsail or ventilation of any kind, the room being too deep in the water to admit of opening the scuttles. The unfortunates condemned to this place used, most of them, to sleep on deck, which by nine o'clock in the evening, was so lumbered up with beds, bearskins, serapes, and men upon them, that moving was out of the question. In my berth, with a window always open, the heat was dreadful, and I was seldom able to sleep owing to this. I suffered also a good deal from prickly heat which gave me a great deal of annoyance.

Six days after leaving Acapulco, to the delight of everybody on board, we came in sight of Panama, without anything having taken place of note, save burying a poor fellow who died of dysentery, and

meeting two more steamers bound to California. These two made up the total of eight that had been met by the "Oregon," on her downward passage; they were all American, and all crowded with passengers. I own that it does seem strange to me that England, which has hitherto been foremost in all matters of enterprise, takes no heed of what is going on in California and the Pacific generally. I am confident if a line of steamers was to be established between Panama and California, they would be found to answer as well, if not better than any speculation yet set on foot by Englishmen. Notwithstanding the steamers we had met, carrying at least 250 passengers each—and that is probably far below the mark—two thousand persons were waiting at Panama, when I arrived there, unable to get on. Some of these told me they had been there six weeks, having taken *through* tickets from New York for steamers on the other side, which had never arrived to keep their engagements.

American steamers go in crowds round Cape Horn, often seeming to forget entirely that the article of coal is necessary to the prosecution of this voyage, and making no preparations for supplying

this deficiency on the road; as witness the unfortunate "Sarah Sands," which arrived within 200 miles of San Francisco and there stopped for want of coal. Many of her passengers went overland, and endured extraordinary hardships, travelling through forests and countries almost unknown. Apropos of this, I may state that shortly before I was at Panama an American firm in the town one day purchased a cargo of coal, and the same afternoon, before the purchase-money had been paid, in came a steamer, I think the "Columbus" from New York, bound for California, entirely out of coal. She immediately purchased the entire cargo, and gave the firm 16,000 dollars for their bargain.

The only steamers that have a regular supply of coal is, or was when I was there, the Howland and Aspinwall or mail line; and, as our captain naturally enough said, "we are not going to cut our own throats by giving them our coal." Merchants on the Pacific have, moreover, more confidence in the British than the American flag as far as safety and dispatch go; and I am sure, that were some British steamers established between Panama and California, we should soon see a great part of the

gold and silver that now comes from California and ports in Mexico to Panama, from Panama to New York, and New York to Liverpool, in American vessels, come by the shorter and more direct route of Southampton, entirely under the English flag. At present England is of little or no account in the northern part of the Pacific, and for one vessel with her flag are to be seen certainly twenty American.

We reached Panama betimes in the morning, and all the passengers anxious to get across the isthmus hurried ashore. A gentleman bound down the coast to Valparaiso and myself waited till the scuffle was over, when we put our traps in a boat and landed in comfort. The town was so full of travellers that some difficulty was experienced in getting a bed; however we were at last put, three in one room, in a wretched, dirty house, our apartment certainly not ten feet square. I had a friend resident in the town and sallied out immediately to look for him; being successful in my search, I bid adieu to my companions, and took up my quarters with him as long as I staid.

Panama, situated in the Republic of New Grenada, bears signs of once having been a magnificent town,

ruins of splendid churches being scattered all over it, and some of the houses still presenting a respectable appearance. The cathedral in the Plaza is a beautiful old church, but being all in decay now wears a most melancholy aspect. The town is surrounded by a wall, but on the side of the sea that element has eaten large holes through it in several places; still there is a fine promenade on the top, and the view of the bay is very beautiful. A great quantity of shipping was lying here at the time of my visit, and the numbers of beautiful islands in the bay make this one of the prettiest sea views I ever saw. All these islands, covered with pleasant verdure, presented a great contrast to Mexico when I left it, everything there being dried up; but the rainy season had begun here sometime, and hence the greenness.

I remained in Panama for four days, the English steamer from Chagres not sailing until the 28th—and I arrived on the 20th. There is nothing to see here except ruins, dirt, and gambling-tables. The whole town is Americanised in appearance, almost every house calling itself the American, New York, or some such hotel, and many of them surmounted

with the "stars and stripes." Everything is enormously dear, the prices being almost Californian. I went to look at some of the sleeping-apartments in the hotels. They were long rooms entirely filled with beds, placed certainly not six inches from one another, throughout the whole length of the room; and the charge for accommodation, even such as this, was enormous.

Fever was at this time very prevalent in Panama, and the poorer Americans who could not afford to pay for decent lodgings were suffering from it very much. It was very hot during my stay, and but little rain fell; mosquitoes, sandflies, &c. were very troublesome.

The natives of Panama are the most forbidding-looking people I have met with, and hideously ugly both men and women. They have a great deal of African blood in them, mixed with a touch of the Spaniard and old Indian. They have, however, a good deal of courage, and are strong-built, active fellows. Shortly before my arrival, a severe affray took place between these men and their unwelcome guests the Yankees, in which the latter were utterly defeated, with the loss of three killed, despite the

rifle, revolver, and bowie-knife, which were liberally used.

The environs of the town are flat and covered by a luxuriant vegetation, from the appearance of which I am sure the soil must be capital, and might be turned to much account by the establishment of market-gardens; however, there is not such a thing in New Grenada, and not a vegetable is to be procured in Panama for love or money, the very potatoes that are there having been brought from the United States.

When the day came for my departure, I engaged two mules to carry my baggage and one for my especial riding; the former I started off at six in the morning, myself following about ten. I calculated upon easily getting to Cruces that night, and embarking on the Chagres river next morning. I reckoned, however, without my host, taking Mexican mules for my standard. My own animal, after doing some three or four leagues pretty well, gave in, and neither the thrashing of myself nor my attendant could get her out of a walk, and she often came to a dead stop, remaining in one place till pleased to go on. In the course of the day I came upon

two mules covered with mud, standing by the side of a deep pool of mud and water, and out of which an immense naked Indian was dragging something black. I waited to see the haul, and to my great disgust found it was one of my own portmanteaus, the other still invisible. The mules, it appeared, being as bad as the road, had capsized themselves and burden into this delectable place, and of course required to be unloaded before extrication was possible. Owing, however, to good waterproof covers, my goods were little the worse for their immersion.

New-Grenadian mules and muleteers are far below the Mexican. The mules appear to have little stamina, and are so badly loaded and driven, that accidents and breakdowns are always happening. I reached only the half-way house between Panama and Cruces the first night, the latter part of the road being most miserable, even worse than anything I had seen in Mexico. Here, however, they were in the thick of the rainy season, whereas in Mexico whilst I was there we had no rain.

I met an immense quantity of travellers, and among them some ladies, who, I believe, were going

down the coast to Peru or Chili. The greater part of the Californian-bound Americans travelled on foot, hiring men or mules to carry their baggage. Were I to go again at the same season of the year, I would do the same, being confident I could move faster on my own legs, on a New Grenadian road in the rainy season, than on those of a mule.

On applying for a bed at the half-way house, I was shown a long table, on which all visitors were expected to repose side by side, like sausages in a poulterer's window. On my expressing some doubts as to the feasibility of this, without a mattress, and in the company of so many others, my worthy host, and a jolly fellow he was, pointed out a grass hammock swinging in the bar, and this I immediately appropriated. These hammocks, made at Guyaquil, in Peru, are most comfortable affairs, the best possible invention for a hot climate, the slightest motion in them stirring up a delightful breeze. Guyaquil furnishes an immense quantity of these, as well as of hats and other matters made of this material, to all the towns on the Pacific; and there was not a single house in Panama, I will answer for it, that had not such a hammock in every room. On the

present occasion I slept as well as ever I did in my life.

I started early the following morning, and reached Cruces, on the Chagres river, by eleven o'clock. My mule had broken down so utterly that I exchanged her for another I procured at a rancho by the road-side, and for which I had to pay eight dollars additional. The road was throughout most horrid; in many places it was so scooped out by the water and constant traffic, that it had sunk deep between high banks. These cuttings were often very long, and wo betide any unfortunates that entered at one end, at the same time with a party bound the other way at the other. There was no room to pass, and as neither would give in, the scuffling and swearing among the savage black fellows conducting the mules was awful. I saw a fight between the two leading mules of different parties at one of these meetings. My mule, or the mule going my way, was laden with large bars of silver; the one coming the other way had two immense portmanteaus. After a good deal of pushing, the weight of the cargo told at last; my mule getting one of his silver bars under one of the port-

manteaus of his antagonist, fairly capsized him upon his back in the road, and effectually blocked up all passage for at least an hour. During the fray, and the efforts made to raise the fallen, there was nothing for it but smoke and be patient.

All the treasure is sent across the isthmus on mules and without any escort whatever; the silver being carried openly in great bars, without even a cloth to hide them. This shows how much honester or less enterprising the New Grenadians are than the Mexicans; but I think, since I passed, one robbery has been committed on this route.

The whole of the land-road across the isthmus, is very beautiful, but so buried in forest that little can be seen of the country. The trees, creepers, and plants are much the same as I had seen in the tierra caliente in Mexico, and they were all now fresh and green, owing to the heavy rains. Many traces of the good road made by the successors of Pizarro, Vasco Nunez, and the Buccaneers, are still visible, but what is left of it is suffered to go to decay.

In two or three places I saw men at work on our track, and was told by them that they were making the railroad; but unless more active steps are

taken, I doubt if it will come to much. In the whole of the isthmus, as far as I saw, there is nothing to stop either railroad or canal: the hills are all inconsiderable; and the easier and cheaper processes of felling huge trees and clearing land, would be agreeable substitutes for the tunnelling and heavy cutting one sees so often in England. I hope whatever is done, *we* shall have some hand in, and not let the Americans monopolize everything in the west; we shall certainly reap a good deal of the profit. The road, such as it is, is at present of little use to anybody; and there can be no doubt that the passage of merchandise across the isthmus would be doubled and trebled, in a very short time, if there was any way of taking it.

Cruces is a little village, with plenty of American hotels. I breakfasted here, with a gentleman to whom I brought a letter from Panama, and with his assistance hired a canoe for the descent of the river. My boatmen were very decent fellows, and the best specimens of their countrymen I had yet seen. I embarked about one o'clock, and though it had been fine hitherto, it began to rain soon after, and continued almost without intermission until I reached

the English steamer. The river, the whole distance, is most beautiful, with magnificent forests on both sides, swarming with parrots and other birds. There are a good many "snags" in its bed, but my boatmen easily avoided them. These canoes are fitted with an awning of palm branches, covered with tarpauling; under this sits the traveller, perched on his baggage, and drifts down with the stream, the canoe-men seeming to take it easy, as a recompence for the labour they have in coming up. A few leagues below Cruces we passed Gorgona, the other and more usual starting-place for passengers; but the rain had made the road from Panama to this place almost impassable. Shortly before dark we paddled into the side, and made fast to the bank, opposite an American house of entertainment. There I landed, and got some tea, eggs, and salt pork. Every four or five miles the traveller comes to a spot cleared in the forest, where the enterprising Yankee has erected a canvass tent by the side of the river, dignified with the name and sign of American hotel. These places are very useful to the traveller and profitable to the landlord, so at least the proprietor of one told me.

We had proposed pursuing our route when the moon rose, which she ought to have done, and did, I suppose, about nine p.m. However, when I woke at midnight, after a good snooze under my awning, I found we were still moored, and the men asleep. The moon was also obscured, and proceeding was therefore out of the question. Owing to the rain above, the river had begun to come down in great force, and brought trunks of trees, boats adrift, and all manner of things along with it. I have seen a Scotch salmon river rise pretty suddenly before now, but never fifteen feet in one night, as did the Chagres river when I came down it. It was all in our favour, however, and we did not grumble, though some unfortunates going up did most ruefully.

We started at daybreak, and went down very fast, meeting upward-bound boats and canoes in crowds. I am sure, from first to last, I saw a hundred, and carrying at the very least four passengers a-piece. These boats, with such a stream against them, made very little way. They were either poled along the bank, or dragged along by the branches of trees hanging in the water; towing was also going on wherever it was practicable to walk, rowing being

of course out of the question. We stopped half an hour for breakfast at another American hotel, and shortly afterwards met a steamer bound up the river. She did not at all appear fitted for the business, and had only ascended once before in a flood similar to the present.

The Chagres river is certainly the most beautiful I ever saw, and coming down it, stretched at full length in a canoe, with such lovely scenery on all sides, is as pleasant a morning's occupation as I know. I reached the steamer about three o'clock, and to my delight found her the same in which I had come out from England. Previously to going on board we landed for a few minutes at Chagres, which is nothing but a miserable village, or rather two, for there is one at each side of the river's mouth—one American the other native; they are both equally bad.

I should think the whole distance across the isthmus, the way I came, does not exceed seventy miles, and fifty of it river.

CHAP. XII.

VOYAGE HOME.

CHAGRES — AMERICAN STEAMERS — CARTHAGENA — HOME PURCHASES—JAMAICA—KINGSTON—SPANISH TOWN—SAN DOMINGO —PORTO RICO—ST. THOMAS—PASSENGERS—BULL—JUMPING OVERBOARD—FAYAL—SOUTHAMPTON—HOME.

I was very glad to find myself once more back on board the English steamer. Her clean white decks formed a great contrast to the dirt of all sorts that was so liberally sprinkled over those of the "Oregon." I found about twenty passengers already on board, most of whom had come up the coast on the other side from Peru and Chili. Two were from St. Juan de Nicaragua and going to England officially, to arrange the Nicaraguan treaty with the foreign-office authorities. They were both very gentlemanly men and people of note in the republic of Costa Rica. We remained at anchor for another day waiting for the mails and specie; the latter, as already remarked, I had passed on

the road. Owing to shoal water, the steamers lie off at some distance from the shore. This position is inconvenient for those who wish to land; but Chagres holds out no inducement to do so; and in other respects this situation is rather an advantage, as the ship, at such a distance from land, is quite free from mosquitoes, and probably less liable to the fever of the country.

I amused myself part of the time we were at anchor by fishing with one of the officers belonging to the ship: we caught a good many of a very pretty and good-eating fish.

Two American steamers for New York, the "Georgia" and "Philadelphia," had left just before I arrived. They had been lying at anchor close ahead of the English one; and her officers all remarked what I have before mentioned, the peculiar tendency American ships have to roll: these steamers showed this peculiarity strikingly on the present occasion, whilst the other was as steady as if in Southampton docks. Many passengers for England had gone by these steamers. This American route is decidedly the quickest; and unless faster English ships are put on this line, it will soon be the

only one taken by passengers to and from Peru, Chili, &c. The Georgia is a very large, fine, fast ship, and some months before, had landed at one time the immense number of thirteen hundred passengers at Chagres, all bound to California. There were also two or three small American steamers lying in the river, and employed in carrying men, tools, and other requisites for the railroad from one point of the bay to another.

On inspecting my baggage after I came on board, I found one carpet-bag, which I had flattered myself was waterproof, ruined with all its contents. The rain on the river had been such a regular steady pour that the men were obliged to bale out the canoe every quarter of an hour, and my unlucky carpet-bag, sitting in the water the whole time, was regularly soaked.

We left early on the morning of the 29th, having taken on board about 1,500,000 dollars' worth of gold-dust and silver. The entrance to the Chagres river is guarded by a picturesque old fort, but I should think it is not in a very fit state to stand a siege. For some distance we ran along the coast, low, but well-wooded, and then stood across the

Gulf of Darien to Carthagena. Time on board passed as usual, but I never felt more at home or more comfortable than I did in my large airy cabin (the same I had when coming out), after the unwholesome heat and squeezing we had endured on board that miserable "Oregon." The next afternoon we came in sight of land, so low as at first to be almost imperceptible; and about four o'clock entered the splendid harbour of Carthagena by the "Boca Chica," or little mouth.

This entrance is guarded by two forts, one just inside the entrance, on one of the large islands which form the harbour, and the other, seemingly built in the sea, but in reality upon a reef, which is partly uncovered at low water. There is a much finer entrance than this, but it is now impassable. The Spaniards, during the war, were so afraid of the English cruizers, that they sunk several vessels full of stones in the "Boca Grande," and completely blocked it up. They would now give their ears to have them removed, and the old channel restored.

The harbour of Carthagena is enormous, and formed by several islands, which are so close together that, to a person inside, they appear like

the mainland. The town is situated some ten or twelve miles from the Boca Chica, and a winding, intricate channel, like that at Bermuda, leads you up to it.

We anchored about six o'clock within half a mile of the town, and were immediately surrounded by a host of bumboats, with parrots, monkeys, tiger-cats, and all manner of wild animals. I got some capital cocoanuts, and all made purchase of something or other. Conch shells were brought alongside in great profusion, and I noticed that this was a favourite article with the sailors, as well as a gaudy sort of matting, very neatly made. Almost everybody on board bought parrots, and for a few days, until they settled down in their places, the ship was a perfect Babel. I think about seventy of these interesting birds still survived when we reached Southampton. Mine, in company with half a dozen more, committed suicide: having a taste for mechanics, they went down below to inspect the engine, and all got through the gratings of the floor, and were drowned in the bilge-water.

I had intended to go ashore for half an hour the next morning, but was too lazy to do so, and thus

lost, I fear, the sight of a fine old town. From the sea, Carthagena looks very well, and has many fine churches and other large buildings. A picturesque-looking convent is perched on a hill at the back of the town, and is considered a place of much sanctity. Carthagena is, and rightly I fancy, considered the finest city on the Spanish main—in fact, in this part of South America.

We took on board here a good deal of gold dust, which had come down from Bogota, a mining town among the mountains.

Next morning we left at ten, and reached Port Royal, Jamaica, on the day after, at sunset. The weather was fine, but with a fresh breeze and heavy sea, which acted very powerfully upon some of the passengers. The captain, admiralty agent, the other officers, and myself, had it all our own way at breakfast and dinner the first day, and but a few stragglers, and those not destined to stop long, joined our party the second. A strong current was in our favour, and the old ship astonished herself and the engineer, who told me he had never, since he belonged to her, seen her go so fast. The blue mountains of Jamaica appeared in sight by the

middle of the second day, and as the sunset gun was fired from the "Imaum," we ran in and anchored alongside of her.

The following morning at daylight we steamed up the harbour to Kingston. The captain told us that he should not leave for five days, and during this time nearly all the passengers, myself among them, went ashore and took lodgings, to get out of the coal-dust. The island of Jamaica is so well known that I shall say little about it. I was, however, much struck by the want of cultivation in the neighbourhood of Kingston, and on inquiry was told that all the sugar estates are situated more in the interior of the island.

The town of Kingston is large and good, with plenty of trade, and numbers of well-furnished shops and warehouses in every street. From not knowing any one I found it excessively dull, and was heartily glad to get back to the ship. I was little prepossessed in favour of the natives, whether black or white; they all united in grumbling about the state of the island and ruin of trade.

I do not wonder that English residents in Jamaica are fond of sending home their children for education.

I never in my life heard such a curious tongue as the Creole in common use is. I found it easier to understand a black fellow who spoke this in its native purity, than the white man who had learned it from him, and bedizened it with his own additions and improvements. Imperfect as my knowledge is of Spanish, I found that language much easier to understand than such English as is spoken by residents in Jamaica.

On one or two occasions I drove into the country, and once went by the railroad to Spanish Town, the seat of government. The Camp or barracks for the troops in the neighbourhood of Kingston, is a fine airy place, but only inhabited by the regular West India regiments. The white troops are not able to stand the climate, and live at a town or village called Newcastle, among the mountains. Spanish Town is a miserable place, containing only the governor's residence, house of assembly, and barracks, worth mentioning.

On Monday I again repaired on board (we had arrived on the previous Wednesday), and by two o'clock we were again steaming past Port Royal. One is much struck with the formidable shoals

which surround the entrance to this harbour, appearing hardly to leave room for the passage of ships between them. We ran along the south side of the island, which is very beautiful, and passed one fine sugar estate, the only one I saw. As the sun set, the blue mountains got more indistinct in the distance, and next morning they had disappeared from sight altogether.

At Kingston we had taken on board several new passengers, and among them some ladies and a host of children. Midday brought us in sight of the high land of San Domingo, which is said to be 10,000 feet above the sea. We ran close in and coasted along the shore the whole day, arriving at Jacmel about two or three o'clock in the morning. Here we remained only a couple of hours to land and receive our mails. We took on board one passenger who had crossed the country from Port au Prince; he described this fine island as, at present, sadly in want of cultivation and roads. We followed the shore along, till we came to the extremity of the island and then turned to the left, by a very dangerous channel, with some small islands scattered about it.

The following morning found us in sight of Porto Rico, the most beautiful by far of all the West India Islands I have seen. The whole of this day we ran along the shore within a short distance of the land, and the whole way the island presented a most luxuriant appearance—endless estates of sugar-cane and corn, intermixed with houses and cocoanut palms. Porto Rico is of course a slave island, and certainly the two most beautiful and thriving I had seen, were these two slave islands Cuba and Porto Rico.

By daylight the following morning we entered the harbour of San Juan, defended by a fort, and with a capital lighthouse at the entrance. We only remained a couple of hours, took on board a great many passengers, and steamed out again.

The evening before we reached San Juan de Puerto Rico we experienced a very heavy sea, such as I never saw before—long rolling swells, that tossed our big ship about as if she had been a cork, making standing, sitting, or walking almost equally impossible. There was no wind, and we were rather at a loss to account for this phenomenon; but learned afterwards that it had been caused by a severe hur-

ricane, which had done much mischief among the islands, but of which we luckily only experienced one of the results—this extraordinary commotion of the sea. The weather, since leaving Jamaica, had hitherto been beautiful; but as we approached St. Thomas's, it became very squally and thick, with severe rain. The sea was breaking over reefs and foul ground all about the ship, readily convincing us that, as the captain afterwards said, we were better snug at anchor in St. Thomas than outside. We anchored in that harbour, a very pretty, deep bay, about five o'clock the same afternoon, and found another of the Company's vessels coaling alongside the wharf, outward-bound with the Pacific mails.

We were much afraid that it would have been necessary for us to change ships, having heard a report to that effect at Porto Rico. However, our captain told us not to despair, as he meant to go home if possible. Though our old ship was the slowest of the slow, and her dinners none of the best, yet all were so pleased with the other accommodations, and the kind, obliging manners of the officers, that not a passenger but would have been very sorry to have parted company with her. On

the morning after we arrived, in came the opposition ship from Barbadoes and the other islands, evidently bent upon going home. Our captain immediately went on board her, and after all the pros and cons had been discussed, it was determined that we should remain where we were, and go home in our own ship, the other passengers being transferred to us. At this we all rejoiced greatly; not so the other passengers, who, for the first few days of the voyage, were perpetually drawing invidious comparisons between the merits of the two ships.

We remained at St. Thomas's a day and a half, and coaled an incredible number of tons in that short time, the whole work being done by black women, who did work like horses—one woman at St. Thomas's being reckoned equal to three men in this sort of work.

I spent the whole day on shore and enjoyed it very much. The town is prettily situated on a slope, well built, entirely surrounded by hills, over which are scattered many pretty country houses. Thanks to America, we got plenty of capital ices—a great luxury, as it was intensely hot; we had also a capital dinner at a table d'hôte in the principal

hotel overlooking the harbour. I saw a great many vessels come in during the day in distress, having encountered the hurricane I have before mentioned. From the number of ships always at St. Thomas of different nations, the inhabitants are most skilled in all languages, and I don't know to this day what is their own. All I addressed spoke English perfectly, and I heard just as many speak French as well; German, Danish, and Spanish all have their representatives, and it is the most convenient place for any stranger to stay I have ever met with.

The fine, strapping, light-haired, blue-eyed Danish garrison formed a great contrast to the pure blacks to be found here as elsewhere in the West Indies.

I bought a fresh supply of books, and some of the small nicnacs for which this place is famous, and went on board about twelve. In an hour we sailed, leaving under a thundering salute of seventeen guns from the fort, in honour of a general lately in command of some of the English islands, and who went home with us as a passenger. We had only two guns, and, if disposed, I fancy would have found it a difficult matter to return the salute, so we

dipped our ensign, and I dare say the worthy Danes were quite satisfied.

Our passengers now numbered above eighty: many of them were ladies, and the ship presented an appearance of life that had for some time been wanting. We remained in sight of land all day, but the next morning none was visible, and we had taken our last look at the West Indies.

Time on board was killed by reading, eating, playing whist, shovel-board, and bull—a sort of quoits, in which the ship's officers excelled greatly, and won the money of the unsuspecting passengers who used to play with them. The officers, knowing their superiority, often refused to play; but we had some passengers so confident in their own powers, that nothing would serve them, but play they must, and were regularly cleaned out accordingly. During the voyage, once or twice, the ladies and some of their friends got up a little extempore singing, and on a fine evening it sounded very pleasant and agreeable.

The second or third day after we left St. Thomas, just as the bell had rung for luncheon, the whole ship was disturbed by a dreadful screaming, and on

rushing on deck, we found that a poor woman had thrown herself overboard, with a child in her arms, leaving two more poor little things, the eldest about eight, behind her. The ship was immediately stopped and boats lowered; after about twenty minutes immersion they were both picked up, but quite dead, and all remedies to restore them proved useless. I was much surprised to see these poor creatures floating after death, especially the child, which had hardly any clothes at all upon it; but it seemed as buoyant as a cork, rising on the top of every swell. These unfortunates were both buried the same evening, and a subscription entered into among the passengers for the relief of the children left behind, which by the time the ship arrived at Southampton amounted to upwards of £60.

We had lovely weather all the way home, and a fair wind after the first two or three days, and reached Fayal in the Azores eleven days after leaving St. Thomas. We arrived off this port at night, and lay-to till morning, when we ran in, procured a supply of fruit, vegetables, flowers, and baskets, took on board our mails and one passenger, and were off again.

This passenger, by the bye, was a Jew, and it being contrary to his creed to eat meat killed by the ship's butcher, he performed that gentleman's functions himself, during the rest of our voyage. One bullock, three sheep, and an unlimited supply of poultry died under the hands of this gentleman, whose time was quite taken up with his novel avocation. I was told that on board these ships, this was often the case; and one instance was mentioned on board that very ship, in which a stupid steward, imagining that Jews did this for the mere pleasure of killing, informed one that a pig was to be killed the next morning if he liked to officiate.

The manufacture of baskets at this place is very great, and the whole ship during our stay was swarming with venders of this pretty ware. Fayal is a pretty little white-washed town situated at the bottom of a bay, and having very high land behind it beautifully cultivated. Immediately opposite Fayal and across the strait is the island of Pico with its beautiful mountain-peak rising into the clouds.

The fruits and vegetables we got here were deli-

tions, and I have heard from those who have visited these islands that a residence in them is very pleasant and less Anglified than at Madeira.

Six days after we left Fayal we came in sight of the Start, having seen nothing to amuse us save a few wandering grampuses, and a host of porpoises. We were boarded by a pilot who told us of the death of Sir R. Peel, and other news of the day, and by ten at night, came to anchor off Cowes, entering the Southampton docks at five the next morning. So ended my ten months' ramble, during which I had traversed between fifteen and sixteen thousand miles and seen a good deal of life and manners very different from what one in a similar time could have seen in Europe.

FINIS.

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